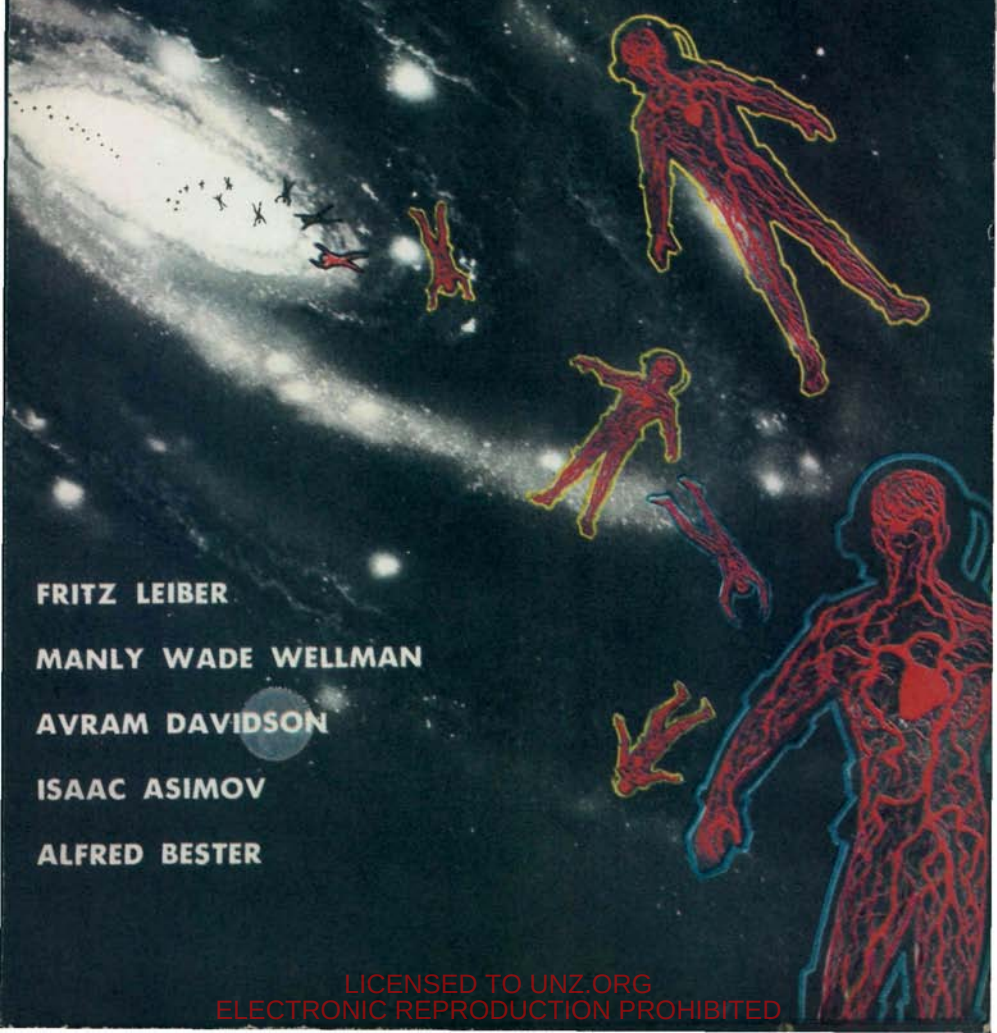
ALL STAR ISSUE

THE MAGAZINE OF Fantasy AND Science Fiction

Novelets by
ZENNA HENDERSON
ROBERT F. YOUNG
EDGAR PANGBORN

MARCH 40¢



FRITZ LEIBER
MANLY WADE WELLMAN
AVRAM DAVIDSON
ISAAC ASIMOV
ALFRED BESTER

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Fantasy and Science Fiction

MARCH *Including Venture Science Fiction*

Jonathan and the Space Whale (*novelet*) ROBERT F. YOUNG 5

Wonder As I Wander MANLEY WADE WELLMAN 37

The Man Who Made Friends with Electricity FRITZ LEIBER 42

Ferdinand Feghoot: XLIX GRENDEL BRIARTON 50

A War of No Consequence (*novelet*) EDGAR PANGBORN 51

The 63rd St. Station AVRAM DAVIDSON 74

Communication (*verse*) WALTER H. KERR 77

Science: That's Life! ISAAC ASIMOV 78

The Stone Woman (*verse*) DORIS PITKIN BUCK 89

Books ALFRED BESTER 90

Shadow on the Moon ZENNA HENDERSON 94

In this issue . . . Coming next 4

F&SF Marketplace 130

Cover by Mel Hunter

The Magazine of Fantasy and Science Fiction, Volume 22, No. 3, Whole No. 130, MAR. 1962. Published monthly by Mercury Press, Inc., at 40¢ a copy. Annual subscription $4.50 in U. S. and Possessions, $5.00 in Canada and the Pan American Union; $5.50 in all other countries. Publication office, 10 Ferry Street, Concord, N. H. Editorial and general mail should be sent to 347 East 53rd St., New York 22, N. Y. Second Class postage paid at Concord N. H. Printed in U. S. A.

© 1962 by Mercury Press, Inc. All rights, including translations into other languages, reserved. Submissions must be accompanied by stamped, self-addressed envelopes; the Publisher assumes no responsibility for return of unsolicited manuscripts.

Joseph W. Ferman, PUBLISHER *Robert P. Mills,* EDITOR
Alfred Bester, BOOK EDITOR *Isaac Asimov,* CONTRIBUTING SCIENCE EDITOR
J. Francis McComas, ADVISORY EDITOR *Ruth Ferman,* CIRCULATION DIRECTOR

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In this issue . . .

. . . the second Edgar Pangborn story about Davy, who appeared here last month in "The Golden Horn." The setting is an area near New England, and the time is some point in the future after an unspecified traumatic change in our present way of life. In one sense of the phrase, this is science fiction . . . but let us listen to a word from the author:

"These stories—I don't quite think of them myself as science-fiction—deal with a world that doesn't require a true suspension of belief. Conditions like these could come into existence, simply as a result of factors operating in today's world: the mutations, change of climate, destruction and disappearance of modern culture after a time of upheaval in which atomic war was only one element, human beings thrown back into a primitive (call it medieval) way of living with a latent possibility of staggering up and trying again some time. Civilizations have perished before; personally I don't think ours will perish in this way, but it could. These stories are fantasy; I'd like to call them fantasy used as a special lens for looking at present reality."

We particularly wish we could have squeezed more stories in this issue than we were able to—because we feel some of the items we'd hoped to include are especially suited to an All Star Issue. However, there is always next month, and the month after that. In which connection . . .

Coming next . . .

. . . a new editor, and regretful as we are to step down from the chair, the change is made enormously easier than it might well have been because matters are being turned over to a man as varied and able as Avram Davidson. Mr. Davidson's name has shown up regularly on F&SF's contents page—as it does again this month—and even semi-regular readers are surely familiar with his wide range of interests, deft, sure command of the language, and extraordinary erudition. We leave this magazine, after being associated with it from its first issue in the fall of 1949, solely because the demands of other professional responsibilities no longer leave enough time to do the kind of job on F&SF we feel should be done. We are confident the magazine will flourish under Mr. Davidson, and wish it and him the very best.

—Robert P. Mills

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Another of Mr. Young's inquiries into the nature and implications of the familiar enlarged to giant proportions. Join him this time aboard a black leviathan a thousand miles in length and almost as many in girth—a monster that feeds on meteor swarms, cosmic dust, flotsam . . . and people.

JONATHAN AND THE SPACE WHALE

by Robert F. Young

HIS NAME SHOULD HAVE BEEN Jonah. It wasn't—quite. It was Jonathan—Jonathan Sands.

He was only twenty-nine, but in his day he had been many things—a student, an evangelist, a bartender and an adman, to name just a few. He had even written a book once, but this hardly bears mentioning in view of the fact that no one besides himself had ever read it. Shortly before the opening of this history he had joined the New Earth Space Navy and become a gunner.

In those days a gunner didn't have much to do in the way of actual gunnery. He was required to keep his gun capsule shipshape and his gun in good working order, and it was his bounden duty to see to it that none of the thermo-nuclear projectiles assigned to him was ever in imminence of accidental detonation; but the only time he was ever under any pressure was during target practice, and even then the pressure wasn't particularly great. No, a gunner's life was a good one—provided you liked plenty of sack-time, plenty of monotony and plenty of comic micro-films. Jonathan didn't. Neither did he like the three main pursuits indulged in by his fellow crew-members whenever the good ship *Firststar* hit port—i.e. wine, women and *stong*. He was no more cut out to be a spaceman than he had been cut out to be an adman or an evangelist. He had never found his forte, Jonathan hadn't, and probably he never would have if the space whale hadn't come along.

Before it swooped into the solar

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

system on the twenty-third day of April, A.D. 2339, and took a bite out of the asteroid belt, the space whale was a myth. For decades merchant spacemen had been telling tall tales of sighting it, but no one, except their shipmates, had ever taken them seriously. A whale living in *space*? A black leviathan a thousand miles in length and almost as many in girth, feeding on meteor swarms, cosmic dust and flotsam? A space-born cetacean capable of exceeding the speed of light? Shades of Herman Melville! The universe was filled with a number of things —granted—but a space whale was not one of them.

However, tales spacemen tell are one thing and official sightings are quite another. Moreover, a missing asteroid the size of Mars' larger moon cannot be lightly written off. Hence, when the N.E.S. *Icarus*, outward bound from Mars, informed the Mare Sirenum Base that a cetaceous UFO the size of Titania had just appeared out of nowhere, reduced the planetoid population to the tune of one, and taken off in the direction of Andromeda, steps were instituted immediately to avert any further devastations. A quick check of the ship-deployment map revealed the *Firststar* to be the only warship in the neighborhood of the monster's trajectory, and orders were dispatched forthwith to the captain thereof to be on the lookout for "a whale-like entity as big as a moon, capable of engorging asteroids" and "to sink same if sighted". (Navalese had gone into orbit with the first American cosmonauts and was now as much a part of space as it had once been a part of the sea.)

The Captain of the *Firststar*—Captain Thaddeus S. Albright, to keep the record straight—bore down posthaste on the alert buzzer. A spaceman of long standing, he knew full well that the main impediment to the success of his mission lay not in the space whale's ability to swallow his ship but in the gravity exerted by the creature's mass, and knowing this he also knew that his best means of destroying it lay in ultra-maneuverability such as the *Firststar* per se did not possess. Therefore he ordered the chief gunnery officer to prepare one of the gun capsules for lowering. The capsule chosen was the one to which Jonathan Sands was assigned.

The radar room picked up the target first, and not long thereafter it became visible on the scopes. It was as black as space itself and would not have been discernible had the distant sun not reflected, however wanly, on its surface. It put Captain Albright in mind of a pollywog at first, but knowing space as he did he knew that anything that looked like a pollywog at the target's present

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

distance would shortly resemble something far more fearsome, provided it was coming in the proper direction. The pollywog was, and soon it began looking just like what the captain had figured it would look like—namely, a whale. And it was still a good one hundred thousand miles away.

He got on the intercom again. "Lower the capsule," he said, "and put me in contact with the gunner."

The capsule dropped like a sleek black egg from the *Firststar's* underside, hovered for a moment and then shot forward on its own power. In its gyroscopic center, where the yoke would have been, sat Jonathan Sands, fingers deftly chording the multicolored console of the gun mount. He had the space whale centered on the cross-hairs of the sight in a matter of seconds, then he locked the capsule into hovering position and began making the minute adjustments necessary to maintain his focus.

Captain Albright's voice emerged from his helmet radio: "We're backing off now—can't take a chance on being drawn into orbit. Take it just before it's broadside of you and fire your retros for all they're worth. Make the first shot count—you won't have time for a second."

I'll fire when I see the whites of its eyes, Jonathan thought grimly. However, it had no eyes. Nor mouth either. There was only blankness where the face should have been—black blankness. Acres of it. No, not acres—miles. For the first time Jonathan realized how big the space whale was. The head had a diameter of at least seven hundred miles, and its "lower hemisphere" blended into a relatively brief body that was appended by two huge flukes. He could not see the flukes very well from his present angle, but he could see them well enough to tell that they were rigid. In any event, they couldn't possible have performed their analogous function in the vacuum of space.

Big, had he thought? Lord, the creature was enormous! Its ebony bulk was eclipsing half the stars now, and growing by the millisecond. Could such a Brobdingnagian being possess intelligence?—and was it aware of the horrendous death that awaited it from the thermo-nuclear sting of the tiny midge that hovered in its path?

"Prepare to fire," Captain Albright said.

Jonathan was already prepared. The space whale was less than ten thousand miles away now . . . Nine thousand. Could it feel pain? he wondered. It did not seem to be constituted of flesh and blood, but was it necessary to be constituted of flesh and blood in order to be able to experience pain? . . . Eight thousand. Who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was man to say that simply because he was comprised of this, that and the other thing that in order to be able to feel, other beings must be similarly comprised? . . . Seven thousand. That man and man alone, being so comprised, was the only form of sentient life that could know pleasure and suffer sorrow? . . . Six thousand—

"What are you waiting for, you fool!" Captain Albright shouted. "Fire!"

—Feel the wind and the rain and the sun, know the splendor of the stars and the grandeur of the night, the sweetness of dawn and the serenity of evening—

"Fire!" Captain Albright screamed. "I'll have you court-martialed, I'll have your hide, I'll—"

Jonathan depressed the projectile-release button. Simultaneously he depressed the retro-rocket button. But the simultaneity did not end there, for he also depressed several of the target-centering buttons. The space whale disappeared from the cross hairs and the projectile missed by a thousand miles, arrowing off into the immensities to become a sudden flaming star. The capsule, torn out of position and propelled by both the recoil and the retro-rockets, went into orbit around the whale. Somewhere in his travels Jonathan Sands had met Mercy, and the meeting had left its mark.

It was not a good orbit. Roche would have frowned upon it, and with justification, for it began with a radius considerably within his limit, even allowing for a disproportion in relative density that did not necessarily exist. It could have, then, but one outcome, and indeed it had endured for less than an hour when Jonathan heard the preliminary creakings that preluded the capsule's forthcoming breakup.

He was by no means finished, but to all practical purposes he might as well have been. His radio had gone dead, and while his suit-tanks contained enough oxygen to sustain him for ten hours, it was unlikely that he would have been able to find a way out of his predicament even if they had contained twice that amount. He had no choice, then, but to resign himself to becoming a small satellite revolving around the whale's head, along with the fragments of the doomed capsule. This sorry state of affairs was not long in coming into being, and presently he knew what it was like to be a human moon with no more control over his activities than a yoyo spinning at the end of a string. Behind him floated one of his thermo-nuclear projectiles, while ahead of him, spinning lazily in the starlight, was the entire top section of the capsule. The whale, at this close range, was a whale no longer, but a black vast planet,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sans mountains, sans seas and sans sanctuary.

He took a fix on Orion's belt and began timing his revolutions. The first one lasted 20.3 minutes, the second 19.6 and the third 18.9. At this point he became aware that the projectile and the top section of the capsule were no longer keeping him company, that they had, in fact, forsaken him altogether, and simultaneously he realized what was happening. He was being drawn closer and closer to the whale, while they, and the rest of the debris that had resulted from the capsule's breakup, were being forced into a wider and wider orbit that would result in their eventual escape into space. No longer was his destiny obscure.

18.2 minutes. The time had come to make his peace with God. But he did not close his eyes—there was no need to. Instead he looked out into the vast reaches of the star-bedight blackness of space. He had seen the face of God there many times, and now he saw it again, endless, eternal, argot-eyed; scarred by novae, darkened by dust, radiant with the burning of a trillion trillion suns. He closed his eyes then, briefly, for the beauty and the grandeur was too much for him to bear. When he opened them again his orbit was no more and he was falling toward the whale.

Now was the time to think of everything he was leaving behind. Of light and laughter and love. Of firelight and rare wine. Of the sun coming up in the morning and of the sun going down at night. There was a girl too. He had gone walking with her once in the subterranean gardens of the moon. He tried to think of her name, but it would not come to him. He tried to remember her face. Had it been heart-shaped? Oval? Full? Thin? He did not know; all he could remember were the cool and lovely flowers they had walked among. Perhaps he hadn't liked her nearly as much as he had thought.

He tensed himself for the final moment. He needn't have, for the final moment did not come. The whale turned out to have a mouth after all—not a mouth by ordinary standards, but a mouth nonetheless. It had been closed before. Now, open, it was in a sense still closed, for it had not opened like an ordinary mouth. It had merely rearranged its atomic particles to permit the passage of other particles—in this case, the particles that, *in toto,* comprised the entity known as Jonathan Sands—and now the process was continuing in depth. Jonathan found himself falling through utter darkness into a seemingly fathomless gullet, and yet all the while he fell, he felt the pace of his descent slackening by degrees, till finally he realized that he was floating, rather than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

falling, floating almost imperceptibly downward—no, not downward, upward—and that he had nothing to fear in the whale's throat but only in its belly.

Abruptly light burst around him, and a moment later solid ground materialized beneath his back. Disbelievingly he sat up. The light came from a small sun suspended in a greenish sky, and the ground was part of an expanse of rocky terrain that stretched in three directions and then, instead of curving downward, curved gently upward and blended into the sky. The fourth direction—the one immediately before him—was pre-empted by a towering mass of pitted basalt that he at first took to be a mountain. It was not a mountain though, he realized presently, or at least it hadn't been originally. It was an asteroid.

Still not believing, he got to his feet. The gravity approximated Venus's so closely that he could have sworn that he was on New Earth. The little sun, however, said quite emphatically that he wasn't, and the greenish sky and the asteroid concurred. The asteroid was perhaps half a mile distant, and only a small portion of it protruded above the surface. The visible part was as large as Everest.

This, then, was the belly of the whale.

Jonathan became aware that he was trembling. Not from so piscayune an emotion as fear, but from awe. He had known that the space whale was big, but this—why this was a whole world! There was a sky, a sun, land—

Was there air too?

The gauge that kept tab on the contents of his oxygen tanks was inset in his helmet just above eye-level. Glancing at it he saw that he had less than a quarter of an hour's supply remaining. He had his choice, therefore, between two courses of action. He could wait fifteen minutes and then remove his helmet, or he could remove it now. And how would he spend that precious quarter of an hour should he decide to wait? he asked himself. Trying to remember the face of the girl with whom he had gone walking in the subterranean gardens of the moon? Suddenly he laughed aloud, and unscrewing the helmet, doffed it to the sun.

He gasped. Not from a lack of air but from an abundance of it. Air richer in oxygen-content than New Earth's had ever been or ever would be. Richer even than Old Earth's. He slipped out of the rest of his suit and stood there breathing deeply of the day. The sun was warm upon his face, and a gentle wind bore the scent of growing things to his nostrils. Flowers, grass, grain. Trees in summer bloom—

Puzzled, he regarded his surroundings. The ground consisted of rocks and gravel and sand. Not

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a single tree grew anywhere, not a single flower; not a single blade of grass—

No, not here, Jonathan. This is pre-processed land—a wilderness, if you like.

He spun around, even though he knew that the voice had not come from behind him, that it had not been a voice at all. Any action is better than none when words that are not your own materialize in your mind. *But they are your own, Jonathan. They are the words you dressed my thoughts in, just as these are the words you are dressing them in now.*

"Who are you?" Jonathan said.

I am the ground you stand on, the air you breathe, the sun that warms you, the bulkhead that protects you from the vacuum of space. I am the space whale—though in actuality I am much higher on the scale of evolution than your analogous cetacean.

Jonathan raised his hands and pressed his palms against his temples. The ordeal through which he had gone had been too much for him to bear, after all. He had broken under the strain, and now there were words in his mind that had no business being there. *But they do have business being there, Jonathan. They are my projected thoughts clad from the wardrobe of your vocabulary. Think what you wish to know and I will answer. But hurry: I can maintain contact only so long as exterior conditions do not divert my attention.*

Vast, he thought. *Gigantic . . . gargantuan . . . ugly.* And then, *A telepathic whale!*

I am not truly ugly. It has been said, by certain members of my school, that I am—fair.

A female *whale!*

It is true—I am a woman. A woman who saved your life because you were too compassionate to take hers.

You saw me waiting then—and when my capsule broke up you swallowed me deliberately.

Not "swallowed"—"absorbed". There was no other way, Jonathan. I could not let you die . . . Beyond the pre-processed land where you now stand you will find other lands. Green lands. And you will find people of your own kind—a civilization in which you can find a place beneath my sun. Go to the lands and the people. I am giving you your life because you gave me mine, even though I—I— There was a pause; then, *If you will proceed in the direction in which you now face, you will come to a valley. In the valley you will find life and laughter—and, if you are lucky, love. Go, Jonathan. Go.*

Stunned, he thought, *A civilization? A civilization in the belly of a whale? But how? Why?*

His waiting mind remained empty.

But how? he thought again.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Not a single word appeared on the anxious horizon of his awareness.

"But how?" he asked aloud. "Why?"

The sun shone mutely down and the greenish sky was inscrutable. The wind had lost its tongue. *Very well,* Jonathan thought, *so be it,* and stuffed his spacesuit into his helmet and set forth across the wilderness, leaving his oxygen tanks behind him.

And so it came to pass that Jonathan Sands walked down into a valley in the belly of the whale. It was a lovely valley, wide and green. There were trees and roads and houses, and in the distance a shining city showed. Instead of seaweed, he had found grass. Instead of darkness, light.

The sun was warm upon his shoulders and the grass was soft beneath his feet. The shade beneath the trees was deep and cool. They were charming trees with flowers in their verdant hair, and birds the hue of rainbows sang artless arias in their branches. There were little lakes as blue as Old-Earth skies, and field after cultivated field spread out on either hand, each greener than its predecessor. The wind was soft and sweet.

He came to a road and started walking along it. It was a macadam road, smooth and firm. He heard a murmur of sound behind him, and turning, saw a four-wheeled vehicle approaching. He identified it presently as an automobile, although he had never seen an automobile before. But he had seen pictures of them in books—history books—and this one provided him with a clue to the nature of the civilization with which he was shortly going to have to contend. The reality was so alien to his expectations that at first he could not accept it.

The driver slowed when he saw Jonathan, came to a stop. He was clad in a pastel suit that matched the color of his car and he was middle aged and gray of temples. "Lift into the city?" he asked.

The English was archaic and embodied a strong provincial flavor; but it *was* English, and the reality Jonathan had come face to face with could no longer be ignored. Here was an excerpt out of the Book of Old-Earth—a chapter entitled "Mid-twentieth Century America". And he had found it—of all places—in the belly of a space whale. "Thank you," he said, climbing numbly into the car. And then, unthinkingly, "What city?"

The driver looked at him closely, glanced at the suit-stuffed helmet on his lap. He set the car in motion. "Did you say 'what' city?" he asked.

"I've—I've been away," Jonathan said lamely.

"But not as long as you seem

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to think you have. Prosperity II isn't completed yet—won't be for another two years . . . I didn't know anyone still went prospecting in Weirdland any more."

Jonathan maintained a sensible silence. "I never could see much point in anyone risking his life in such a place," the driver went on. "Especially when it's impractical to mine anything when you do discover it. The wind and the rain would be bad enough, even without the tornadoes and the earthquakes." And then, "Have any luck?"

Jonathan shook his head. The less he said, the less liable he would be to say the wrong thing—and the more opportunity the driver would have to divulge information with regard to the civilization that had cradled him. But the driver, apparently, had said all he was going to say without encouragement, and now a silence ensued.

Jonathan made good use of it. Tying in the green cast of the atmosphere with the gentle upward curvature of the land, he arrived at the conclusion that the space whale's belly was analogous to a planet turned inside out. Clearly it occupied the creature's entire forestructure, and probably the gravity that held everything in place was supplied by a magnetic field of some kind in the creature's hide. The sun, however—if it really was a sun—was beyond his comprehension. He surmised that it occupied the precise center of the sphere and that the force that held everything else in place held it in place also; but its presence in such an unorthodox milieu confounded him, and his mind balked at analyzing either its purpose or its properties.

The presence of human life was not as incredible as it had at first seemed, for certainly if the whale had swallowed him it could very well have swallowed others like him. And if it was capable of swallowing an entire asteroid, it was more than capable of swallowing a mere spaceship. Assuming that it had a longevity of a thousand or so years, its present human population could very well be the descendants of the passengers and crew of such a ship—or ships, for that matter. Ships were always coming up missing, had been for centuries, and some of them had never been found. None of which explained, however, why the present society read like a yellowed page out of the Book of Old Earth.

Abandoning his speculations temporarily, he devoted his attention to the encompassing countryside. Low, pastel-hued houses appeared by the roadside at intervals of roughly a quarter of a mile. The intervals themselves consisted of fields and orchards and vineyards, and, less frequently, pastures. Occasionally long multi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

windowed buildings—obviously factories of some kind—could be seen in the distance, and once Jonathan glimpsed a row of tall stacks that unmistakably denoted a primitive open hearth. People and machines were visible in the fields and vineyards and orchards, and cattle could be seen grazing in the pastures. Nor was the road itself bereft of activity. Vehicles similar to the one in which he was riding abounded, and in addition there were other, much larger, vehicles that appeared to be cargo carriers of some kind.

One of the latter passed them on a curve, cutting in so soon afterward that they were nearly driven into the ditch. Jonathan's benefactor cursed it roundly. "The highways just aren't adequate enough any more," he complained, "and its impossible to build new ones fast enough to keep up with our expanding economy. I'll be glad when Prosperity II is ready for settlement. It'll at least relieve the population pressure even if it does hurt local trade."

Jonathan looked at him thoughtfully. "And when Prosperity II is settled, what then?" he asked.

"Why we'll begin building Prosperity III, of course. You know that. And after Prosperity III, we'll build Prosperity IV. Just the way it says in the Good Book . . . Anybody ever tell you you've got an odd way of talking?"

"I have a speech defect," Jonathan said. Then, "Eventually you're—we're—going to run out of new lands. Where will we expand to then?"

The look that his benefactor gave him would have made him wince if his skepticism hadn't been aroused. "Run out? In a universe as big as all this? You'd better stay away from Weirdland, young man, that's all I've got to say. It's warping your perspective."

"But surely you must realize that however miraculous it may be in other respects, a whale's belly isn't infinite!"

This time Jonathan received only a quick glance. His suit-stuffed helmet received a similar one. ". . . A whale's belly?"

Jonathan was out of patience now. "Now don't try to tell me you don't know you're living in the belly of a whale!"

His benefactor's face took on a greenish cast. "If—if you don't mind, I'll go on alone from here. You can pick up another ride at those crossroads up ahead."

Jonathan did not demur, and when the car slowed to a stop, he got out. He opened his mouth to say "Thanks", but there was no one to say it to: the vehicle was already speeding away, rear tires spinning in a frantic attempt to gain traction. He laughed. Well, at least he had learned one thing: either the people living in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whale's belly were reluctant to admit the fact, or else they honestly weren't aware of it. In either event he would do well to avoid the subject in the future.

He laughed again. Having his sanity doubted was a new experience, and it amused him. Then he looked at the fields stretching away on either side, at the road arrowing away before him; at the trees and the crops and the houses. He looked at the greenish sky—

A whale's belly?

Quickly he lowered his eyes to his spacesuit. He sighed with relief. It was nothing more than metal and rubber and cloth and wires, but it vouched for his sanity. Nevertheless, a spacesuit, however reassuring it might be, was not an ideal object for a stranger in a strange land to be carrying around, and the sooner he got rid of it, the better. Entering a nearby coppice, he cached it in the crotch of a foliage-shrouded tree; then he returned to the road.

He resumed his trek, coming presently to the crossroads his benefactor had mentioned. A farmhouse stood on the corner, and a small produce-stand fronted the road. The fruits and vegetables that were on display surprised him. They were staples on New Earth, their seed having been brought in by the early settlers—tomatoes, cucumbers, sweetcorn, muskmelons, peppers and string beans. Looking at them brought to mind how hungry he was, and the succulent tomatoes made him poignantly aware of his thirst.

A girl in a blue dress was sitting beneath a tree in the farmhouse yard. When he paused, she got up and came over to the stand. She had dark hair and an oval face and gray eyes. Her tanned skin had a faint golden cast. "Yes?" she asked.

He explored the empty pockets of his fatigues with rueful fingers. The little money he had remaining from his last pay reposed in his space chest on the good ship *Firststar*. It would have done him no good anyway, he supposed. What good would New Earth Government currency be in a society comprised of people who had never heard of New Earth?

He pointed to a particularly large tomato. "How long," he asked, "would I have to work to earn that?"

The girl regarded him steadily, betraying only by a faint flicker of her eyelashes that she had noticed his unorthodox pronunciation. There was a tiny pock mark high on her right cheek, the remnant, probably, of a childhood bout with some form of chicken pox. "We do need help in the fields," she said presently, "if you're really interested in working. We pay the standard rate for farm labor."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He wondered what the standard rate was, but considered it the better part of discretion not to ask. In any event, he had but little choice: if he wanted to eat he would have to work, and here was as good a place to begin as any. "I can start right now," he said. "But first I'd like a drink of water."

"Very well."

He followed her around the house, and she pumped a tumbler full of water for him from a deep cool well. He drained it, and she pumped another; then she went over to the house and opened the back door. "Watch the stand for a while, mom," she called. "I'm taking a new hand out to dad." "All set?" she asked, returning to his side.

He accompanied her down a narrow road that was deeply etched with wide tire treads. Fields spread out on either side, and in the distance he heard the rhythmic grunting of a primitive tractor. He wondered what time it was, but hesitated to ask. Perhaps time as he knew it did not exist in a world where the sun hung perpetually overhead.

The girl's long legs covered the ground rapidly, and his own tired ones made it difficult for him to keep abreast of her. "I'll need your name for our records," she said.

He gave it to her, wondering if she would tell him hers. She did not. They were skirting a cornfield now, and in an adjacent field the tractor was approaching, dragging a crude cultivator between two rows of tomato plants. In common with the other vehicles he had seen, it was gasoline-propelled. A tall lean man, crowding middle age, was driving it.

He stopped at the end of the row, dismounted and waited for Jonathan and the girl to come up to him. His face was weathered, and the fields he had worked in all his life showed in his pale blue eyes. "This is Jonathan Sands, dad," the girl said. "He wants to work."

It was a lie, Jonathan thought wryly, but he said nothing, and when the lean man got a hoe from a rack on the side of the tractor and headed toward the cornfield, he followed him docilely. The girl returned the way they had come. "Hot day," the lean man said. He made a few deft strokes with the hoe around one of the stalks of corn. "Work it loose a little and throw some of it up around the plant." He handed Jonathan the hoe and walked away.

It was Jonathan's first experience at hoeing corn. As time dragged by, he hoped fervently that it would be his last. After a while a sort of dull apathy settled upon him and he ceased to think. Up one row, down another. Up. Down. Abruptly he became aware that something was happening to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the light around him. Was the sun going down? he wondered giddily. But it couldn't go down. This wasn't New Earth. This was the belly of the whale, and he was Jonah. Jonah in a cornfield.

Straightening, he looked up into the sky. No, the sun wasn't going down—it was going out. Before it had been a bright yellow; now it was a pale red. So there was to be darkness in the whale's belly after all.

Someone touched his shoulder. "Time to quit," the lean man said.

Jonathan walked back to the farmhouse in the wake of the chugging tractor. The sun grew paler and paler, and darkness began settling over the land. The lean man drove the tractor into a large shed behind the house, and Jonathan headed for the pump. He reveled in the cool water, splashing his face with it and letting it run over first one wrist and then the other. The girl brought him out a towel. "You can eat with us," she said.

After drying himself, he accompanied her into the house. Illumination came from lamps and fixtures powered by a primitive form of electricity. Cooking was done over gas. The kitchen was quite pleasant—bright of walls and colorful of cupboards; gleaming of appliances. The girl's mother was an older edition of the girl. She was autumn, and the girl was spring.

The girl introduced herself. Darlene Meadows. Then she introduced Jonathan to her mother, and after her father came in, the four of them sat down to eat. There were potatoes, tomatoes, string beans and steak. Jonathan remembered the cattle he had seen. The world of the whale wanted for nothing.

After the meal was over, Mr. Meadows motioned for Jonathan to accompany him outside. The sun was almost out now, and barely visible in the sky. Mr. Meadows turned on an outside lamp, and light spilled down the porch steps and out over the lawn. He cleared his throat. "I can keep you on for a while," he said, "if you care to stay. My son decided to become a copywriter and I've been hard-pressed for help ever since. Vagrants are rare these days, and vagrants who want to work are even rarer."

Jonathan smiled. So he was a vagrant now. Perhaps that was what he had been meant to be all along. "I'll need a place to sleep," he said.

"Come with me."

Jonathan followed him across the yard, into the shed and up a narrow flight of stairs into a small loft. Mr. Meadows switched on a wall light, revealing a narrow bed, a table and a chair and a dresser. "Satisfactory?" he asked.

Jonathan nodded. Compared to his cramped quarters on the *First-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

star, the place was a palace. "If you don't mind, I'll turn in right now," he said. "I'm exhausted."

After Mr. Meadows had gone, he lay down on the bed and closed his eyes. But he did not fall asleep. He could not. His muscles were tense, and his mind, stimulated by the strange and incongruous data it had absorbed, was a riot of speculation. Perhaps a walk beneath the stars might help him to relax—

Stars! What was he thinking of? There could be no stars in the belly of a whale. Well he would walk anyway, beneath the sky if not the stars. And afterward he would sleep. Sleep in the belly of the whale.

The night air was cool and a brisk wind was blowing. He walked around the shed and down the road that wound among the fields. The fields stood out in glinting paleness and the road was distinct beneath his feet. Odd that there should be light. Surely the sun was out by now. He raised his eyes to the sky—

And saw the stars.

Hundreds of them. Thousands. Blue ones, red ones, yellow ones—

Yes, stars, Jonathan—why not? All skies have stars.

This time he took the alien thoughts in his stride. *But your sky is too small for stars,* he "said". *How could it possibly contain even so much as a single one?*

You are right—it could not, save for a small one such as my sun. The universe of me is a pebble on a beach of boulders beside an endless sea. My stars are not really stars.

And yet they seem real.

They are real—so real, in fact, that the inhabitants of my world employ them to mirror and distribute a unique species of television image. But they are not truly stars. In a broad sense, they are analogous to the muscae volitantes *you yourself sometimes see on hot bright days. My sun, among many other things, is my organ of vision. My—my eyes.*

And you can see this world inside yourself, and space and stars too? And myself standing here in the darkness of your night?

Yes, I can see you—and simultaneously I can see parsecs into space. And I can receive and send telepathically for millions of miles.

It must be a wonderful thing to be a space whale.

It is a terrible and a lonely thing. But I did not contact you to talk about such matters. I contacted you to find out if you were content.

As content as I shall ever be, Jonathan said. And then, *This world of yours—this universe—I know that it provides your sustenance in some way—but how?*

There was a long pause. Finally, *It will be difficult for you to understand, but I will try to explain. Think of the land, with its*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

various elements, as my food, and think of the sun and the rain and the birds and the insects and the nonpathogenic unicellular bacteria and the cycle of nights and days as my digestive juices. I absorb the land raw, and its elements are gradually assimilated into my body where they are reprocessed into energy, some of it the atomic power with which I propel myself through space. But equally important to my well-being is the action of my digestive juices upon the face of my earth —the creation of topsoil and the growing therefrom of green things; the resultant process of photosynthesis and the cycle of decay and death and the springing forth of new life from old. Space whales are born with land in them, Jonathan, land and air and water, but as we grow older we must replenish our supply from time to time.

And you do so by absorbing asteroids?

Asteroids and cosmic dust—as well as ice from the rings of planets such as your sixth from the sun.

And flotsam?

Sometimes.

And spaceships too?

There was a pause even longer than the one before. Then, *Spaceships are forbidden, but I absorbed one when I was young, and too headstrong to obey the dictates of my elders. That was almost three hundred of your years ago. The ship was called the* Prosperity *and it was bearing one of the first groups of colonists from Earth to Venus—the planet you now call "New Earth". The people you have come among are the descendants of those colonists.*

But even three hundred of my years ago, Jonathan said, *the level of human civilization was much higher than this. Why should these people be living in a society the prototype of which has been dead for nearly four centuries? And why aren't they aware that they are living in the belly of a space whale?*

You put it very crudely, Jonathan—and after I went to such pains to explain! The present society, to take your first question first, is not the result of happenstance but the result of careful planning by the original colonists —the founding fathers. They knew that they could not bequeath to their offspring the technology they themselves had enjoyed in their own society for the simple reason that they themselves possessed but rudimentary skills and knowledge, and that as a consequence the civilization they were being forced to found would slip back a few hundred years before gaining the necessary foothold to move forward. But before they died, they were able, through the rewriting and the enlargement of a certain book, to see to it that the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

new colony, when it did gain the necessary foothold, would proceed along foreordained lines. It has done so, and continues to do so at an accelerated rate; but many years have still to pass before it attains even the level of civilization that the founding fathers knew.

The answer to your second question is partially present in the answer to the first. The founding fathers, believing that there was no escape from the world in which they found themselves, saw no reason to burden their progeny with false hope. Hence they told their children that the new colony —named "Prosperity" after the ship—was the new beginning of human civilization and that the world in which it had sprung up was the entire cosmos. The book I mentioned before was rewritten to this same effect, and the ship was destroyed to avert embarrassing questions. I did not know that rapport with my inhabitants was possible at first, and by the time I discovered that it was possible, it was too late.

Too late for what? Jonathan asked.

It does not matter now.

You said before that it was a lonely thing to be a space whale, Jonathan went on. *Why should this be so? You inferred that there were others of your kind.*

His waiting mind remained empty for some time. Then. *Yes, there are many others—but all of them have gone. Two hundred of your years ago they set off across the Andromeda Deep toward greener pastures—toward the island universe you call Messier 31.*

And you did not go with them —why?

In a way I am like the Andromeda of your ancient mythology. In a way I am an Andromeda myself—an Andromeda chained to a rock on the shore of a boundless sea, waiting for the monster to devour her. But unlike the original Andromeda, I have no Perseus—and he could not unchain me even if I had.

I don't understand, Jonathan said. *I don't understand at all.*

It is better that you should not.

And there's something else I don't understand also, he went on. *You said that you could receive and send telepathically for millions of miles. If this be true, then you must have read my intent to kill you when you saw my capsule in your path. Why, then, did you keep on coming? Why didn't you change your course?*

This time his waiting mind remained empty for so long that he thought the whale had severed contact. But such did not prove to be the case. The words that appeared on the horizon of his awareness, however, were remote from any he had expected to see: *Perhaps because I wanted to die.*

Why should you want to die?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is not good to be an Andromeda without a Perseus. The shores of the sea are dark and lonely, and my chains are cruel. And when one must die soon anyway, there is little will to live.

Shocked, he said, *Then there really is a monster!*

Yes, Jonathan. Soon now it will devour me. Soon now I will be dead.

But you can flee from it. Your chains aren't real!

No, they are not. But even though they are only figurative, I cannot break them. And now we must say good night.

No, Jonathan said. *First you must tell me more.*

I have told you too much already. Besides, I did not contact you to talk about myself, but of you.

Will you contact me again?

Only if you want me to.

I want you to very much.

Very well, I will contact you then. Good night.

Good night, Jonathan said. *Good night—Andromeda.*

In the belly of the space whale, darkness endured for nine hours, and daylight for fifteen. In each hour there were sixty minutes and in each minute there were sixty seconds. In the seconds lay the secret behind the seeming coincidence of the twenty-four hour day. They had been lengthened so that the slightly longer darkness-light sequence would conform to the slightly shorter darkness-light sequence that the founding fathers had become accustomed to on Old Earth.

A similar adherence to past chronology existed on New Earth, and by extension, in the New Earth Space Navy. But, unlike the darkness-light sequence in the belly of the whale, the darkness-light sequence on Venus did not approximate Old Earth's. Venus's day, in fact, was so long that it could not sensibly be considered a day at all, and consequently Old Earth time had been retained arbitrarily and a prime meridian had been established on Venus to correspond to the one passing through Greenwich. Hence, while Jonathan's year corresponded to that of the whale, his month, owing to the accumulation through the centuries of the daily time-difference, did not. His month was April—that of the whale, March. However, it did not take him long to accustom himself to the discrepancy, and by the evening of his second day in the whale's belly, he had forgotten all about it.

Just the same, the idea of months existing at all in such a milieu was disconcerting in itself. The world of the whale knew neither moon nor orbit, and yet the three hundred and sixty five days of the year were despotically determined in the Gregorian tra-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

dition, and every fourth year, February unfailingly acquired an extra twenty four hours. Darlene, when Jonathan playfully asked her the reason for this latter phenomenon, could supply him with no satisfactory answer. The Good Book, she said, ordained that such a thing should be so, and therefore it was so. Moreover, she added pointedly, it was not fitting to discuss such matters. He did not question her further.

Months predicate weeks, and weeks predicate weekends, and now one was on hand—the last weekend of March (space-whale time), A.D. 2339. Looking at the calendar in his room above the shed, Jonathan knew more bewilderment than before. How did the inhabitants of the world of the whale—the Prosperians, as they called themselves—correlate their own brief history with the number of years contained in the date and the number of previous years that it implied? In view of the fact that the demise of the world was imminent, the question was not a particularly important one; but just the same, he was curious. Perhaps the Good Book would provide the answer. All Prosperian families owned one, and maybe he would have an opportunity to look through the Meadows' copy this very evening, for Darlene had also told him that he did not need to think that simply because his sleeping quarters were in the loft over the shed that his living quarters need be too. Moreover, in line with her tacit invitation, she had supplied him with several pairs of pastel slacks and several pairs of pastel shirts out of her brother Ben's wardrobe, saying that as Ben lived in Prosperity now and wore nothing but business pastels even when he came home weekends, the clothes were only going to waste. (Strictly speaking, "Prosperity" was the name of the colony rather than the name of the city in its midst, but people living in the country considered themselves a group apart and were prone to make a distinction.)

Finding the Good Book posed no problem. It rested on a small stand beside the fireplace and it had "Good Book" written all over it. "I'd like to do a little browsing, if you don't mind," Jonathan said after Darlene invited him into the parlor following supper. "I haven't had the opportunity for a long while."

Darlene's gray eyes grew warm. "You've more than welcome to," she said, sitting down on the sofa in front of the television set and activating the receiver tube.

He sat down beside her and opened the Good Book on his lap. He consulted the *Old Testament* first, and turned to Genesis. It was a compromise between the King James and Douay versions, but unremarkable otherwise save

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

for the absence of all references to phenomena alien to the world of the whale, such as the "lesser light" God had made to rule the night. The same minor editing existed throughout the other books, except for the Book of Jonah. That had been omitted altogether. Apparently the forefathers had been bitter about their plight and had not wished to be reminded of it in any way whatsoever.

He went on to the *New Testament*. Again, minor changes were the rule, and he began to despair of finding the answer to his question. Then, to his surprise, he came upon a third testament.

It was called the *Modern Testament* and was divided into five parts. The first part was called the *Second Deluge*. In it was described how God, angry over the mess His children had made out of everything during the twenty-two centuries ensuing the Crucifixion, had caused the waters to rise again and the face of the earth to be changed. Before doing this, however, he commissioned a Faithful Few, headed by George Simms, Jim Connors, Ed Mazur and Tony Rivera, to build an ark, the name of which was to be the *Prosperity*, and to fill it with two each of Holsteins, two each of Herefords, two each of Yorkshires, two each of Rambouillets, two each of Rhode Island Reds, two each of Narragansetts, two each of Pekings; provisions for all and sundry; seeds/bulbs/plants for every vegetable and every fruit and every flower; carpenter tools, machinist tools, electronics equipment; and one copy each of the following books: the Bible, *The Machinist's Handbook, The Carpenter's Companion,* Mulrose Duffy's *Physics made Easy,* Albert Whittleton's *Mathematics for the Masses,* David Corey's *Elementary Advertising,* and John Optimum Peety's *Everybody can be a Do-it-yourselfer*. Everything went off on schedule, and after forty days and forty nights the waters subsided and Messrs. Simms, Connors, Mazur, Rivera, & Co. set about founding the New Civilization. It was at this point, if you took what you were reading seriously, that the second coming of Christ had occurred.

The second part of the *Modern Testament* was called *The Second Gospel according to St. George.* In it was described how God had benevolently sent His Son to Earth again in order to see to it that this time everybody got started off on the right foot. Whereupon His Son provided a blueprint for the New Civilization, explicit directions for developing a progressive economy, and a credo which read as follows and which, in style and grammar, was typical of the whole testament: *My father gave you this world to make yourself*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

happy and contented with, so just make sure you do it. And remember this: nobody is no better than anybody else, even if they have a bigger house and car than you do, and a better job. And stay out of my father's sky—he don't want no people up there!

The third, fourth and fifth parts of the *Modern Testament* were entitled respectively *The Second Gospel according to St. Jim, The Second Gospel according to St. Ed,* and *The Second Gospel according to St. Tony,* and did not essentially differ from the first gospel except as follows: *The Second Gospel according to St. Jim* contained instructions for building a gasoline-powered motor, *The Second Gospel according to St. Ed* contained instructions for building an electrically powered motor, and *The Second Gospel according to St. Tony* contained a remarkable—if rambling—essay on the harnessing of electricity and the processing of crude oil. Many charges could be brought against the founders of Prosperity, but no one could ever accuse them of being dreamers.

Jonathan returned the Good Book to the stand and resumed his seat on the sofa. His head was whirling, and to still his thoughts he made an attempt to interest himself in the program in progress on the television screen. It was a play of some kind, but the story and the acting were so naive compared to the sophisticated performances he was accustomed to that he found it impossible to suspend disbelief. Darlene, though, was absorbed—not so absorbed, however, that she didn't hear the car pull into the driveway and the footsteps on the gravel path.

She was up and over to the door in half a second. Clouds had appeared in the sky that afternoon, and the sound of falling rain could be heard when she swung open the portal. "Mom, dad!" she called. "Ben's home!"

Mr. and Mrs. Meadows came hurrying in from the kitchen just as a tall brown-haired young man, attired in a neat pastel suit, stepped through the doorway. "Here, here," he said, freeing himself from his sister's arms. "You'd think I'd been gone a year instead of just a month!" He kissed his mother and shook hands with his father. "Brew some coffee, mom. I brought a real tough assignment home with me and the sooner I get started on it, the better."

Darlene remembered Jonathan, and performed the amenities. Ben's eyes were as gray as hers were, but there were shadows under his. He shook Jonathan's hand. "Well, to work," he said, and marched into the kitchen.

Darlene and Mr. and Mrs. Meadows marched in his wake, and Jonathan, not knowing what else to do, fell in behind them. Ben opened his brief case, spread

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a brightly colored layout on the table and leaned over it. "We've tried this on three different test groups, and every time the response was zero," he said. "But Mr. Dalms still insists that it's good, and he gave me an extra day this week-end to find out what the trouble is. I hate to think what'll happen to me if I show up Monday morning without the answer."

"The answer to what?" Darlene asked.

"The answer to why such a lovely girl as the one you see in the picture can't sell the beautiful chair she's sitting in."

"But you don't have any problem at all," Jonathan said before he thought. "The reason she can't sell the chair is because she *is* sitting in it."

Ben faced him slowly. "I'm afraid I don't follow you."

Jonathan summoned all he knew of mid-twentieth century society to the forefront of his mind, mulled it over for a moment; then, "A chair like that," he said, "is slanted to appeal to the man of the house. In trying to associate it with an attractive girl, you were overzealous, and you ended up by identifying it with her instead. A wife, looking for a chair for her husband, instinctively resents the identification, and a husband, looking for a chair for himself, sees only the girl. To correct this situation, have your artist draw the chair with the girl standing beside it, smiling and holding a pair of men's slippers in her hand. That way, the wife, looking for a chair for her husband, can identify herself with the girl, and the husband, looking for a chair for himself, can associate the girl with the chair."

Ben was staring at him. "Why," he said, "I believe you're right. Are you an adman yourself?"

"I was—a long time ago."

"And you're working as a common farm-hand for a living!" Ben was incredulous. "Who were you associated with?"

Jonathan edged toward the back door. "An agency you've never heard of. Well, I'm happy to have been able to help you out—if I really have. Good night."

"Wait a minute," Ben said. "You can't walk out like that after virtually saving my life!"

"I'm afraid I can," Jonathan said. "And with justification. I'm really quite tired."

"I'm taking this into the office tomorrow morning and I'm going to tell the chief about your suggestion and about you too."

Darlene's eyes had stars in them. Embarrassed, Jonathan opened the door. "You can let me know how things worked out when you come back tomorrow night," he said. "If you still want to talk, we can talk then. Good night."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lying in the darkness of the loft, he felt guilt steal over him. The problem had been such a simple one for someone living in a thought-world almost four centuries older than the present one, and his solving it had been analogous to Einstein solving a problem in eight-grade arithmetic. What would poor Ben do, he wondered, in a civilization so sophisticated that it was so immune to psychological sales techniques that it did not even respond to subliminal perception?

Jonathan sighed. Having betrayed himself for what he was—or what he once had been—he would now be thus identified, unless, of course, his suggestion did not work out. But it would work out—that was the trouble. It would work out as surely as he was lying there on his narrow bed, dozing off in the darkness. As surely as there was a sun in Andromeda's sky.

And work out it did. Ben's face was beaming when he showed up the next evening. Mr. Dalms had had the new layout executed and had tried it out on four test groups. In each case the response had been better than ninety percent favorable. But that was only part of the good news, Ben went on. He had told Mr. Dalms about Jonathan, and Mr. Dalms wanted to talk to him at the earliest opportunity—preferably at nine o'clock Monday morning.

Jonathan was perturbed, and that night he walked beneath Andromeda's stars. Was it right, he asked himself, to take advantage of a primitive society and capitalize on a talent that he did not, in actuality, possess? Was it right to introduce techniques into a civilization when for all he knew that civilization might not be ready for them?—

Yes, Jonathan, in this case it is right. Someday you will wear out your soul from too much searching.

Jonathan looked at the sky. *Are you sure it's right, Andromeda?*

Yes, Jonathan, I am sure. You will be accelerating the growth of a waste-based society, but in the long run the impetus you will lend its onward march will be so slight that the time of its arrival at its goal will be but inappreciably altered.

There is another consideration, Jonathan said. *You told me that you were doomed to die, and that soon now you will be dead. Since you are the world I live in, that means that I will die soon too—so what purpose is there in my doing anything at all, regardless of whether it is right or wrong?*

He sensed both surprise and contrition in Andromeda's thoughts. *I am sorry, Jonathan. I forgot that you did not realize the vast difference in our objective life-spans. Although the subjec-*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tive time of each of our longevities is identical, one of your years is roughly equivalent to one thousand of mine, even though I am capable at moments such as this of slowing my own time down. So while "soon" to me means a year from now, to you it means a millennium.

A thousand years, Jonathan said. *Then I shall live to be an old man after all—barring accident or disease.*

There are no diseases except the diseases that the Prosperians brought with them. Nor accidents, save those they create themselves. My cyclones are gentle, my tornadoes mild, and neither are ever haphazard. They process my wilderness and distribute soil where soil is needed most. And I have no droughts nor floods.

Jonah was only in his whale's belly three days and three nights, Jonathan said. *I shall be in mine a lifetime.* And then, *Before, you said that the founding fathers hid the truth from their progeny because they believed there was no way out. Is there a way?*

For a long while Andromeda did not answer. Then, *No, Jonathan, there is not.*

Then if I must live out my life here, I have the right to live it to the full. I will go to Prosperity then, and exploit my "talent."

You have my blessings.

Thank you, Jonathan said. *Good night, Andromeda.*

The stars pulsed softly in the sky. *Good night, Jonathan. May your days be filled with sunshine and your nights be filled with love.*

And so it came to pass that Jonathan Sands went into the city of the Prosperians, and it came to pass also that his perception and his pen brought him recognition overnight. In less than a week he had an office of his own, three assistants to do his bidding, a private secretary to catch the pearls that dropped daily from his lips, and a girl Friday to guard his door against transgressors.

At first glance, Prosperity seemed more of a sprawling suburb than a city. Actually, however, it had been carefully laid out in accordance with the blueprint in the *Modern Testament,* as had the farms and factories that surrounded it. Its buildings were sturdily constructed and pleasing to the eye; its streets were wide and immaculate. In fact, if it hadn't been for one thing, Prosperity would have been an ideal city. As it was, it came very close to being one, and perhaps this was why its inhabitants accepted its single imperfection. More probably though, Jonathan reflected, they put up with the pestilential pollution that clouded their skies every morning and every evening because its source lay in an object

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they revered—i.e. the gasoline-propelled automobile. Everybody owned one, and some families owned as many as three. Jonathan bought one himself after his second month in the city. Its cost was way out of proportion to its transportation value, and so far as its longevity was concerned, it might just have well have been put together with cotter pins; but in the world of the whale, a man was a nonetity without one—a knight without armor in a society that measured the worth of its members by the outward aspects of their individual coats of mail, regardless of what the Good Book said, and Jonathan, now that he had tasted the heady fruit of the tree of success, was no longer content to be a nonetity.

Darlene's eyes kindled with admiration when he drove into the Meadows' driveway on the evening of the day of his purchase. Previously he had been visiting the farm weekends with Ben, but this weekend Ben was remaining in the city in order to attend a lawn party at the home of his fiancée's parents. Jonathan was suddenly glad. He liked Ben, but Ben had a way of monopolizing his time with shop talk, and frequently there was very little left for less prosaic pursuits.

Darlene climbed into the car beside him and they talked for a while before going inside for supper, touching upon the splendor of the dash, the loveliness of the upholstery and the beauty of the hood. After supper they went riding together. It was a warm night, and Andromeda's stars seemed to swim in the soft blackness of her sky. Darlene was wearing a white dress and there was a red ribbon tied in her hair. The tiny pock mark on her right cheek—her one and only imperfection—gave her face the sole touch it needed to know beauty.

He forsook the heavily traveled roads for the less frequented ones and wound deeper and deeper into the country. High on a hill, where the stars were close, he stopped the car and looked down into the stars in Darlene's eyes. His private secretary was as pretty as she was prompt and his girl Friday had an effervescence that put champagne to shame. But Darlene was a summer's day. He bent and kissed her and tasted the sun and the wind on her lips, and the sweetness of the darling buds of May. Around him the starlight quivered, and the night wind seemed to gasp.

After that, it seemed only natural that they should be talking of houses and cars and kids. They talked for hours, the starlight raining down all around them, and it surprised him that two people could have so much in common when they had known each other for so short a span of time. It surprised him too that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

such a small and lovely head could contain so many plans.

The house was the first consideration, of course, and after announcing their engagement a week later, they set about finding an ideal lot on which to build it. There were plenty available, and they chose one finally that was several miles from the city limits. It was situated on a gentle hillside, had plenty of elbow room on either side of it, and fronted a new road that led arrow-straight to Prosperity and made commuting a pleasure rather than a chore.

Darlene had firm ideas about the kind of a house she wanted to build, and Jonathan gave her free rein. The one she eventually decided upon was typical of the prevailing architectural mood—trileveled, multi-windowed and double of garage. Its levels would go nicely with the contour of the hill and the finished product would blend in pleasantly with the landscape. Excavation was begun forthwith.

Jonathan continued to prosper. They would have four children, he decided, rather than the trifling two they had tentatively agreed upon. Thinking about the matter in his suite—no mere office was equal to his activities now—he smiled cynically to himself. Apparently there was more peasant blood in his veins than he had thought, and now the blood was taking over. He even found himself thinking that peasant stock was good stock, and was astounded by his own apostasy. He, who had written in his one and only book that "should *Hylobates* someday climb down from the trees and propagate himself in excess of other species, we shall doubtless have clichés to the effect that *Hylobates* stock is the sturdiest and stablest of the lot, and that in order for one to be a normal and useful citizen, one's ancestors must have been tree-walking pithecanthropi with fuzzy fur and even fuzzier thoughts."

Troubled one night after seeing Darlene home, he climbed the hill behind the half-completed house and sat down beneath the stars. Seemingly at his feet, the lights of the city began and spread out into a lake of brightness so vast that the concavity of the world of the whale was distinctly visible. Beyond them—above them, in one sense—the handful of lights that was the nucleus of Prosperity II faintly showed. On either side of him the scattered squares of farmhouse windows freckled the darkness, and here and there in the distance blazed the fluorescent pyre of a factory.

Tomorrow he would write odes to toothpaste, toilet tissue and detergents, but tomorrow was far away. Now there was only the night and the wind and the stars, and himself on a lonely hill. And Andromeda—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I thought you had forsaken me, she said. *I thought you had forgotten all about me.*

No, he said, *I haven't forgotten you. I haven't, and I never will.*

Someday you will. It is only natural that you should.

No, he said again. *The world will never be too much with me for that.*

It will be someday, Jonathan, she said. And then, *I lied to you when I said that there was no way out.*

Why?

Because I was afraid that you would take it and afraid that I would be too weak to refuse to help you; because I did not want to be alone. You were the first being I had communicated with for two hundred of your years.

Why should that be? Your world is full of men.

But not men with whom I can speak. Consider, Jonathan: would they respond except with terror to alien thoughts in their minds? Could they accept the concept of their living in the belly of a whale?

No, I guess they couldn't, Jonathan said.

Anyway I lied to you so that you would have to remain. I do not need to lie to you any longer because now you will never leave. You can't leave now, Jonathan, because you too are chained.

What is the way?

Similar to your Jonah's way. But I cannot vomit you forth at will upon the dry land. You would have to go to the pre-processed area—the wilderness—where you first emerged; but first I would have to make room for and absorb a portion of the planet you wished to emerge on. By blending into its rotational pattern I could cancel out its Coriolis Force and minimize the effect of my own mass at the same time. After you stepped upon the surface, I could withdraw and you would be free. But you will not leave now, will you Jonathan. You can't.

No, he said, *I can't.* And then, *Where are we now?*

Beyond the constellation of Andromeda, on the perimeter of the galactic lens. On the shores of the Andromeda Deep. "The sea is calm tonight, the tide is full—" Your mind is filled with lovely words and phrases, Jonathan.

Why don't you set out now, he asked, *and join your people in Messier 31?*

Because I would never make it. I told you once before that I was like your mythological Andromeda, chained to a rock on the shore of the sea, waiting for the monster to devour her.

I don't believe your talk of monsters, Jonathan said. *If you are dying, it is because of natural causes. Perhaps because of old age.* He paused despite himself. *But that can't be,* he said. *You*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

don't sound old, somehow. You sound like—like—

Old? No, I am not old. It is not old age that is killing me, but disease. Disease is a monster of sorts, is it not?

Disease? I don't understand.

I did not mean to tell you, but perhaps it is best that you should know. Space whales, as you call us, are susceptible to harmful bacteria, in common with all forms of life. Bacteria of an order far higher than those that invade bodies like your own, but bacteria withal . . . That is why space whales are forbidden to swallow spaceships.

Stunned, he said, *The Prosperity. The passengers and crew . . . The founding fathers—*

The aerobic pathogenic multicellular bacteria. A few at first, then doubling, tripling, quadrupling. Consuming, destroying. Not out of malevolence but in response to the life force within them. Melting and marketing the ores I need for my sustenance, draining me of oil deposits accumulated over millennia, laying low my forests, enervating my topsoil, taking and not returning, polluting my lakes and my atmosphere; trying to attain the technological El Dorado promised them by their Sunday-supplement Christ . . . The founding fathers were well-intentioned, but their memories were short. In their eagerness to exploit my vast and virgin lands, they forgot the lesson of Old Earth . . . Yes, Jonathan, I am dying. In a thousand of your years the disease will have run its course and I shall be dead.

Aghast, he said, *I did not know, I did not realize.* And then, *But a thousand years is a long time. At least you could cross the Deep and be with your people when you died.*

No, Jonathan, I cannot. The sadness of the thought was almost tangible. *Even traveling at my maximum velocity I could not hope to reach the shores of Messier 31 in less than three millennia. I—I am afraid to die in darkness, Jonathan, in the cold and callous emptiness of the sea. I am not really like the cetaceous creatures you named me after. They were bold and brave and savage. They feared nothing and no one—not even man.*

But man destroyed them, every one. And the sea they lived in and the land that rose out of the sea. Not out of malevolence, no—but was our motivation any better? Is greed noble? Is selfishness? Is anthropocentricism? Tell me, Andromeda, is there nothing we can't destroy?

The horizon of his mind remained empty. *Nothing?* he repeated. *Is there nothing, Andromeda?*

He stood up on the hill, beneath the pulsing stars. "Andromeda, answer me," he said. "Is there nothing we can't destroy?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The stars looked silently down on him. The night wind sighed, but made no comment. Seemingly at his feet glowed the light-inflamed ulcer of the city, and in the distance the new infection showed, insignificant now, but tomorrow vast and sprawling and malignant. "Answer me, Andromeda!" he cried. "Answer me!"

Silence. Stars. Darkness. The lonely wind against his face.

"All right," he said, "so be it," and started down the hill. "If destruction is our destiny, then destruction will be our way of life."

He climbed into his car. Starlight gleamed gently on the rakish hood, glittered harshly on the chrome filigree. The framework of the half-completed house showed against the hillside like the gaunt ribs of a flesh-stripped whale. He backed into the arrow-straight highway and headed for Prosperity. PROGRESS, a sign by the roadside said. ONLY THROUGH PROGRESS CAN MAN'S DREAMS COME TRUE. *Sponsored by the Prosperity Chamber of Horrors.* No, not "Horrors." He looked at the sign again. This time he read it right. *The Prosperity Chamber of Commerce.*

And so it came to pass that on the twenty-fifth day of July, A.D. 2339, Jonathan Sands married Darlene Meadows in the belly of the space whale. Much had he prospered already, and as the months went by he prospered more. Success and security were his, firelight and rare wine, and the love of a lovely woman. In the womb of the house on the side of the hill he spent pleasant evenings watching the walking talking shadows to whose level he had at last reduced himself, and on dew-sparkling Sunday mornings he went to church and listened to descriptions of a Kingdom of Heaven, the exact location of which was unknown but the existence of which was unquestioned, and sang Te Deums to St. George, St. Jim, St. Ed and St. Tony; and on golden Sunday afternoons he read Sunday supplements that patted all good Prosperians on the back for their essential kindness and nobility and adjured them to have more and more babies, for babies were consumers—weren't they?—and didn't the success of a supply and demand economy depend on increasing demand, and wasn't a supply and demand economy the only foundation on which to build the World of Tomorrow?

Yes, Jonathan worked and watched and read and listened, but he was very careful not to think one inch beyond the end of his nose. And then, one day, Darlene told him that *she* was going to have a baby, and despite all he could do to stop them, the walls of the house fell away and he found himself looking outward

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

through the fleshless ribs of a whale.

In common with all Prosperians, he wanted a better world for his children, but would not his children want a better world for their children? And would not their children want a better world for theirs? And wouldn't somebody's children someday arise some sorry Christmas morning and find an empty stocking?

But all worlds died, he reminded himself. Perhaps the presence of man hastened their death to some degree, but in the final analysis their death was as inevitable as the death of suns. The death of this world possessed poignant overtones because of its relative imminence and because of his rapport with it. But had not Andromeda lived for millennia already, and wasn't she going to live for a millennium more? How much was the presence of man in her belly really shortening her life?—and wasn't she doomed to die anyway, regardless of his depredations? And wouldn't somebody's children someday find an empty stocking, waste or no waste, depletion of natural resources or no depletion of natural resources, misuse of topsoil or no misuse of topsoil, pollution of air and water or no pollution of air and water? So wasn't he, Jonathan Sands, crying in his beer over nothing?

His doubts left him, and he began to feel whole again. He had everything a man could ask for, and he was content. Anyone who didn't take the world he lived in for granted, he told himself, was a fool.

Nevertheless, a stubborn question remained in his mind and kept gnawing on the edges of his complacency, and one night when he couldn't sleep he climbed the hill behind the house and stood beneath the stars. Would she contact him again? he wondered. Or had all that had been needed to be said, said, and was he now a part of her past?—

No, Jonathan, you are still very much in my thoughts.

I came, he said, *to ask a question—a question I should have asked before.*

Ask it then, and I will answer if I can.

It is a very simple question, but you must answer it in terms of your years, not mine.

Very well, she said. *Go on.*

How old are you? Jonathan asked.

I'm seventeen.

Around him in the night lights shone from peopled houses, and behind him Prosperity pulsed in polychromatic hues. Above him glistened the stars—

Seventeen . . .

A young girl in a white dress came down a spiral stairway in his mind. Her expectant face was radiant in the light of the chan-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

delier; but the ballroom floor was empty, and there were no musicians playing Strauss—

Seventeen . . .

Consigned to the endless night. Chained to a rock on the shore of the cold and boundless sea. Sick and frightened and alone—

Listen, Andromeda. Here is what we'll do. The answer lies in your stars. In subliminal perception.

No, she said, after a while. *It will be better if I die.*

Listen, he said again. *It isn't you alone I'm saving. I'm saving my people too.*

But there will be hardships, she said. *Many of you will die.*

It's better that many of us should die now than that many more of us should die later. Listen.

She listened, and he sent his thoughts to her, and finally she asked, *What kind of a world do you want?*

One as much like yours as you can find. One with green grass and trees; with lakes and hills and rivers. One with air as sweet as yours is. Do you know of such a world, Andromeda?

Yes, she said. *There is one not far from here. You—you will like it there, Jonathan.*

Perhaps.

I will proceed there now and go into orbit around it so that when the time comes I will be ready . . . Jonathan?

Yes?

Are you sure that this is what you want?

Yes, he said, *I'm sure.* And then, *One of your stars just fell.*

It did not really fall, it just went out—but you may make a wish, Jonathan.

I wish you luck then—and happiness when you rejoin your people. Good night, Andromeda.

Good night, Jonathan, she said. *I wish you happiness too.*

The first message flashed upon the Prosperian television screens the next evening. The program during which it appeared occupied a prime-time slot, and fully half of the people saw it. They did not see it consciously, of course, and even if they had they never would have dreamed that it had originated in the stars. It was a simple message, meaningless without the ones that would follow. JONATHAN SANDS WILL SAVE US, it said.

In accordance with Jonathan's instructions, Andromeda repeated it over and over. The operation was a simple one for a space whale who had been Shanghaied into the industry and without whom the industry wouldn't have had a leg to stand on. She merely varied certain elements of the picture signal which her stars were mirroring, creating an ephemeral image of the desired words.

The next evening the message

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was more complex—and more urgent. WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE SUN STAYED OUT? it asked. It was followed by the first message: JONATHAN SANDS WILL SAVE US.

On the third evening the message read, WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF THE SUN WENT OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY? Later on in the evening it was subtly altered to read, WHAT *WILL* HAPPEN WHEN THE SUN GOES OUT IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY?

In the middle of the next day, it did. Not for very long, but long enough to make everybody sit up and take notice. That evening the message read, WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN THE SUN GOES OUT ALTOGETHER? And then, JONATHAN SANDS WILL SAVE US.

The following day the sun went out for twenty minutes. It was enough. Everyone had been exposed to the messages by this time, and there was no doubt in anyone's mind as to what was going to happen. If there had been, that evening's message would have dispelled it: THE END OF THE WORLD IS ON HAND. JONATHAN SANDS WILL SAVE US. I WILL CONTACT HIM IMMEDIATELY.

Jonathan was prepared, and with the full co-operation of the Prosperian government he organized and effected as orderly an exodus as had ever been seen, either within or without a whale. The promised land lay ready and waiting where part of Weirdland had been, and his astonished flock filed upon it dutifully, carrying belongings, leading livestock, a few of them driving heavily-loaded trucks—the only vehicles he had allowed. Before giving the word, he checked with Andromeda to see if anyone had been left behind; then, looking up into her kindly sky, he said, "We're ready now, Andromeda."

Darkness fell, and cries of terror rose around him. He held his silence: there was nothing he could do. The darkness intensified, became blackness—a blackness so impenetrable that it could almost be felt. Finally there was a faint tremor, and then the vast mass of the whale could be seen rising into an alien sky.

The cries of terror mounted and the gigantic shadow of the whale lay across the land. But only briefly. It shrank rapidly as Andromeda gained altitude, and starlight tiptoed in to take its place. For a moment she hovered in the heavens like a great and gentle moon; then she began to recede. Seemingly in her wake was a constellation that looked like a broken chain.

Jonathan could not move. A knife of pain was transfixed in his throat, and he could hardly see. Did space whales cry too?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yes, Jonathan, they do—although I did not know till now.

His chest was tight and he could barely breathe. Why did he feel this way? he wondered. Naked and alone and forsaken. Perhaps part of the answer lay in the reason why, before he had bled her of her resources and raped her lands and polluted her seas and rivers, man had called Old Earth "mother."

You are different from the others of your kind, Jonathan, Andromeda said from faraway. *You love things for what they are, and not for what they can give you. It is fitting that you should have come into your own as a leader of your people.* And then, *Good by, Jonathan. May your days be filled with sunshine and your nights be filled with love.*

The girl in the white dress came down the spiral stairway again, and this time the ballroom floor and the musicians were in their places. Suitors flocked around her, and the musicians struck up Strauss.

He watched her, then, whirl off into the music, seventeen and no longer alone.

Good by, Andromeda, he said, and now the tears were running down his cheeks. Godspeed!

CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS?

The Magazine of FANTASY and SCIENCE FICTION will follow you anywhere* providing you let us know six weeks in advance. Please be sure to give us your old address as well as the new one, and add the zone number if there is one. (If convenient, send the address label from the wrapper of the next copy of F&SF you receive.)

Subscription Service
MERCURY PUBLICATIONS
580 Fifth Avenue
New York 36, N. Y.

* The American edition of F&SF is now being sent to seventy two (72) countries of the world.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

There seems to be a belated move afoot to collect Manly Wade Wellman's stories of John and his silver-stringed guitar into a book. Mr. Wellman has in mind that the stories might be joined together by vignettes of the following sort, and we are hopeful that you will be as approving of the whole idea as we are. . . .

WONDER AS I WANDER:

SOME FOOTPRINTS ON JOHN'S TRAIL THROUGH MAGIC MOUNTAINS

by Manly Wade Wellman

Then I Wasn't Alone

RECKONING I HAD THAT WOODSY place all to myself, I began to pick *Pretty Saro* on my guitar's silver strings for company. But then I wasn't alone; for soft fluty music began to play along with me.

Looking sharp, I saw him through the green laurels right in front. He was young. He hadn't a shirt on. Nary razor had ever touched his soft yellowy young beard. To his mouth he held a sort of hollow twig and his slim fingers danced on and off a line of holes to make notes. Playing, he smiled at me.

I smiled back, and started *The Ring That Has No End.* Right away quick he was playing that with me, too, soft and sweet and high, but not shrill.

He must want to be friends, I told myself, and got up and held out a hand to him.

He whirled around and ran. Just for a second before he was gone, I saw that he was a man only to his waist. Below that he had the legs of a horse, four of them.

You Know the Tale of Hoph

THE NOON SUN WAS HOT ON THE thickets, but in his cabin was only blue dim light. His black brows made one streak above iron-colored eyes. "Yes, ma'am?" he said.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"I'm writing a book of stories," she said, and she was rose-faced and butter-haired. "I hear you know the tale of Hoph. How sailors threw him off a ship in a terrible storm a hundred years ago, but the sea swept him ashore and then he walked and walked until he reached these mountains. How he troubled the mountain people with spells and curses and sendings of nightmares."

His long white teeth smiled in his long white face. "But you know that story already."

"No, not all of it. What was Hoph's motivation in tormenting the people?"

"His food was the blood of pretty women," was what he replied her. "Each year he made them give him a pretty woman. When she died at the year's end, with the last drop of her blood gone, he made them give him another."

"Until he died too," she tried to finish.

"He didn't die. They didn't know that he had to be shot with a silver bullet."

Up came his hands into her sight, shaggy-haired, long-clawed.

She screamed once.

From the dark corner where I hid I shot Hoph with a silver bullet.

Blue Monkey

"I'LL TURN THIS POTFUL OF PEBBLES into gold," the fat man told us at midnight, "if you all keep from thinking about a blue monkey."

He poured in wine, olive oil, salt, and with each he said a certain word. He put the lid on and walked three times around the pot, singing a certain song. But when he turned the pot over, just the pebbles poured out.

"Which of you was thinking about a blue monkey?"

They all admitted they'd thought of nothing else. Except me —I'd striven to remember exactly what he'd said and done. Then everybody vowed the fat man's gold-making joke was the laughingest thing they'd seen in a long spell.

One midnight a year later and far away, I shovelled pebbles into another pot at another doings, and told the folks: "I'll turn them into gold if you all can keep from thinking about a red fish."

I poured in the wine, the olive oil, the salt, saying the word that went with each. I covered the pot, walked the three times, sang the song. Then I asked: "Did anybody think about a blue monkey?"

"But, John," said the prettiest lady, "you said not to think about a red fish, and that's what I couldn't put from my mind."

"I said that to keep you from thinking about a blue monkey," I said, and tried to tip the pot over.

But it had turned too heavy to move. I lifted the lid. There inside

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the pebbles shone yellow. The prettiest lady picked up two or three. They clinked together in her pink palm.

"Gold!" she squeaked. "Enough to make you rich, John!"

"Divide it up among yourselves," I said. "Gold's not what I want, nor yet richness."

The Stars Down There

"I MEAN IT," SHE SAID AGAIN. "You can't go any farther, because here's where the world comes to its end."

She might could have been a few years older than I was, or a few years younger. She was thin-pretty, with all that dark hair and those wide-stretched eyes. The evening was cool around us, and the sun's last edge faded back on the way I'd come.

"The world's round as a ball," and I kicked a rock off the cliff. "It goes on forever."

And I harked for the rock to hit bottom, but it didn't.

"I'm not trying to fool you," she said. "Here's the ending place of the world. Don't step any closer."

"Just making to look down into the valley," I told her. "I see mist down there."

"It isn't mist."

And it wasn't.

For down there popped out stars in all their faithful beauty, the same way they were popping out over our heads. A skyful of stars. No man could say how far down they were.

"I ask your pardon for doubting you," I said. "It's sure enough the ending place of the world. If you jumped off here, you'd fall forever and ever."

"Forever and ever," she repeated me. "That's what I think. That's what I hope. That's why I came here this evening."

Before I could catch hold of her, she'd jumped. Stooping, I saw her falling, littler and littler against the stars down there, till at last I could see her no more.

Find the Place Yourself

IT MIGHT BE TRUE THAT there's a curse on that house. It's up a mountain cove that not many know of, and those who do know won't talk to you about it. So if you want to go there you'll have to find the place yourself.

When you reach it, you won't think at first it's any great much. Just a little house, half logs and half whipsawed planks, standing quiet and gray and dry, the open door daring you to come in.

But don't you go taking any such a dare. Nor don't look too long at the bush by the door-stone, the one with flowers of three different colors. Those flowers will look back at you like hard, mean faces, with eyes that hold yours.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In the trees over you will be wings fluttering, but not bird wings. Round about you will whisper voices, so soft and faint they're like voices you remember from some long-ago time, saying things you wish you could forget.

If you get past the place, look back and you'll see the path wiggle behind you like a snake after a lizard. Then's when to run like a lizard, run your fastest and hope it's fast enough.

I Can't Claim That

WHEN I CALLED JOSS KIFT'S witch-talk a lie, Joss swore he'd witch-kill me in thirteen days.

Then in my path a rag doll looking like me, with a pin stuck through the heart. Then a black rooster flopping across my way with his throat cut, then a black dog hung to a tree, then other things. The thirteenth dawn, a whisper from nowhere that at midnight a stick with my soul in it would be broken thirteen times and burnt in a special kind of fire.

I lay on a pallet bed in Tram Colley's cabin, not moving, not speaking; not opening my mouth for the water Tram tried to spoon to me. Midnight. A fire blazed outside. Its smoke stunk. My friends around me heard the stick break and break and break, heard Joss laugh. Then Joss stuck his head in the window above me to snicker and say: "Ain't he natural-looking?"

I grabbed his neck with both hands. He dropped and hung across the sill like a sock. When they touched him, his heart had stopped, scared out of beating.

I got up. "Sorry he ended thataway," I said. "I was just making out that I was under his spell, to fool him."

Tram Colley looked at me alive and Joss dead. "He'll speak no more wild words and frightful commands," he said.

"I reckon it's as I've heard you say, Grandsire," said a boy. "Witch-folks can't prevail against a pure heart."

"I can't claim that," I said.

For I can't. My heart's sinful, and each day I hope it's less sinful than yesterday.

Who Else Could I Count On

"I RECKON I'M BOUND TO BElieve you," I admitted to the old man at last. "You've given me too many proofs. It couldn't be any otherwise but that you've come back from the times forty years ahead of now."

"You believe because you can believe wonders, John," he said. "Not many could be made to believe anything I've said."

"This war that's going to be," I started to inquire him, "the one that nobody's going to win—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"The war that everybody's going to lose," he broke in. "I've come back to this day and time to keep it from starting if I can. Come with me, John. We'll go to the men that rule this world. We'll make them believe, too, make them see that the war mustn't start."

"Explain me one thing first," I said.

"What's that?" he asked.

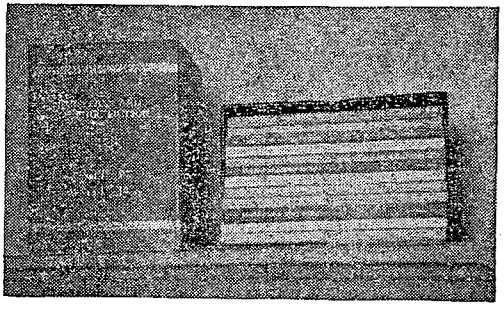
"If you were an old man forty years ahead of now, then you must have been young right in these times." I talked slowly, trying to clear the idea for both of us. "If that's so, what if you meet the young man you used to be?"

So softly he smiled: "John," he said, "why do you reckon I sought you out of all men living today?"

"Lord have mercy!" I said.

"Who else could I count on?"

"Lord have mercy!" I said again.



Handsome, Sturdy

VOLUME FILES

for Your Copies of

FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION

Each Volume File will keep 12 copies of FANTASY & SCIENCE FICTION clean, orderly, and readily accessible. Sturdily built, the files are covered with a rich black and red washable leatherette, and the lettering is in 16-carat gold leaf.

Reasonably priced at $2.50 each, 3 for $7.00, or 6 for $13.00, they are shipped fully prepaid on a money back basis if not satisfactory. Order direct from: JESSE JONES BOX CORPORATION

Dept. F&SF / P.O. Box 5120 / Philadelphia 41, Pa.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The notably varied talents of Mr. Leiber are here brought to bear on the tale of a man to whom electricity talked. Have you ever reflected on the extraordinary things electricity must know. . . . ?

THE MAN WHO MADE FRIENDS WITH ELECTRICITY

by Fritz Leiber

WHEN MR. SCOTT SHOWED Peak House to Mr. Leverett, he hoped he wouldn't notice the high-tension pole outside the bedroom window, because it had twice before queered promising rentals—so many elderly people were foolishly nervous about electricity. There was nothing to be done about the pole except try to draw prospective tenants' attention away from it—electricity follows the hilltops and these lines supplied more than half of the juice used in Pacific Knolls.

But Mr. Scott's prayers and suave misdirections were in vain—Mr. Leverett's sharp eyes lit on the "negative feature" the instant they stepped out on the patio. The old New Englander studied the rather short thick wooden column, the 18-inch ridged glass insulators, the black transformer box that stepped down voltage for this house and a few others lower on the slope. His gaze next followed the heavy wires swinging off rythmically four abreast across the empty gray-green hills. Then he cocked his head as his ears caught the low but steady frying sound, varying from a crackle to a buzz, of electrons leaking off the wires through the air.

"Listen to that!" Mr. Leverett said, his dry voice betraying excitement for the first time in the tour. "Fifty thousand volts if there's five! A power of power!"

"Must be unusual atmospheric conditions today—normally you can't hear a thing," Mr. Scott responded lightly, twisting the truth a little.

"You don't say?" Mr. Leverett

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

commented, his voice dry again, but Mr. Scott knew better than to encourage conversation about a negative feature. "I want you to notice this lawn," he launched out heartily. "When the Pacific Knolls Golf Course was subdivided, the original owner of Peak House bought the entire eighteenth green and—"

For the rest of the tour Mr. Scott did his state-certified real estate broker's best, which in Southern California is no mean performance, but Mr. Leverett seemed a shade perfunctory in the attention he accorded it. Inwardly Mr. Scott chalked up another defeat by the damn pole.

On the quick retrace, however, Mr. Leverett insisted on their lingering on the patio. "Still holding out," he remarked about the buzz with an odd satisfaction. "You know, Mr. Scott, that's a restful sound to me. Like wind or a brook or the sea. I hate the clatter of machinery—that's the *other* reason I left New England—but this is like a sound of nature. Downright soothing. But you say it comes seldom?"

Mr. Scott was flexible—it was one of his great virtues as a salesman.

"Mr. Leverett," he confessed simply, "I've never stood on this patio when I didn't hear that sound. Sometimes it's softer, sometimes louder, but it's always there. I play it down, though, because most people don't care for it."

"Don't blame you," Mr. Leverett said. "Most people are a pack of fools or worse. Mr. Scott, are any of the people in the neighboring houses Communists to your knowledge?"

"No, sir!" Mr. Scott responded without an instant's hesitation. "There's not a Communist in Pacific Knolls. And that's something, believe me, I'd never shade the truth on."

"Believe you," Mr. Leverett said. "The east's packed with Communists. Seem scarcer out here. Mr. Scott, you've made yourself a deal. I'm taking a year's lease on Peak House as furnished and at the figure we last mentioned."

"Shake on it!" Mr. Scott boomed. "Mr. Leverett, you're the kind of person Pacific Knolls wants."

They shook. Mr. Leverett rocked on his heels, smiling up at the softly crackling wires with a satisfaction that was already a shade possessive.

"Fascinating thing, electricity," he said. "No end to the tricks it can do or you can do with it. For instance, if a man wanted to take off for elsewhere in an elegant flash, he'd only have to wet down the lawn good and take twenty-five foot of heavy copper wire in his two bare hands and whip the other end of it over those lines. Whango! Every bit as good as Sing Sing and a lot more satisfy-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing to a man's inner needs."

Mr. Scott experienced a severe though momentary sinking of heart and even for one wildly frivolous moment considered welshing on the verbal agreement he'd just made. He remembered the red-haired lady who'd rented an apartment from him solely to have a quiet place in which to take an overdose of barbiturates. Then he reminded himself that Southern California is, according to a wise old saw, the home (actual or aimed-at) of the peach, the nut and the prune; and while he'd had few dealings with real or would-be starlets, he'd had enough with crackpots and retired grouches. Even if you piled fanciful death wishes and a passion for electricity atop rabid anti-communist and anti-machine manias, Mr. Leverett's personality was no more than par for the S. Cal. course.

Mr. Leverett said shrewdly, 'You're worrying now, aren't you, I might be a suicider? Don't. Just like to think my thoughts. Speak them out too, however peculiar."

Mr. Scott's last fears melted and he became once more his pushingly congenial self as he invited Mr. Leverett down to the office to sign the papers.

Three days later he dropped by to see how the new tenant was making out and found him in the patio ensconced under the buzzing pole in an old rocker.

"Take a chair and sit," Mr. Leverett said, indicating one of the tubular modern pieces. "Mr. Scott, I want to tell you I'm finding Peak House every bit as restful as I hoped. I listen to the electricity and let my thoughts roam. Sometimes I hear voices in the electricity—the wires talking, as they say. You've heard of people who hear voices in the wind?"

"Yes, I have," Mr. Scott admitted a bit uncomfortably and then, recalling that Mr. Leverett's check for the first quarter's rent was safely cleared, was emboldened to speak his own thoughts. "But wind is a sound that varies a lot. That buzz is pretty monotonous to hear voices in."

"Pshaw," Mr. Leverett said with a little grin that made it impossible to tell how seriously he meant to be taken. "Bees are highly intelligent insects, entomologists say they even have a language, yet they do nothing but buzz. I hear voices in the electricity."

He rocked silently for a while after that and Mr. Scott sat.

"Yep, I hear voices in the electricity," Mr. Leverett said dreamily. "Electricity tells me how it roams the forty-eight states—even the forty-ninth by way of Canadian power lines. It's sort of pioneer-like: the power wires are its trails, the hydro-stations are its waterholes. Electricity goes everywhere today—into our homes, every room of them, into our of-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fices, into government buildings and military posts. And what it doesn't learn that way it overhears by the trace of it that trickles through our phone lines and over our air waves. Phone electricity's the little sister of power electricity, you might say, and little pitchers have big ears. Yep, electricity knows everything about us, our every last secret. Only it wouldn't think of telling most people what it knows, because they believe electricity is a cold mechanical force. It isn't—it's warm and pulsing and sensitive and friendly underneath, like any other live thing."

Mr. Scott, feeling a bit dreamy himself now, thought what good advertising copy that would make—imaginative stuff, folksy but poetic.

"*And* electricity's got a mite of viciousness too," Mr. Leverett continued. "You got to tame it. Know its ways, speak it fair, show no fear—make friends with it. Well now, Mr. Scott," he said in a brisker voice, standing up, "I know you've come here to check up on how I'm caring for Peak House. So let me give *you* the tour."

And in spite of Mr. Scott's protests that he had no such inquisitive intention, Mr. Leverett did just that.

Once he paused for an explanation: "I've put away the electric blanket and the toaster. Don't feel right about using electricity for menial jobs."

As far as Mr. Scott could see, he had added nothing to the furnishings of Peak House beyond the rocking chair and a large collection of Indian arrow heads.

Mr. Scott must have talked about the latter when he got home, for a week later his 9-year-old son said to him, "Hey, Dad, you know that old guy you unloaded Peak House onto?"

"Rented is the proper expression, Bobby."

"Well, I went up to see his arrow heads. Dad, it turns out he's a snake-charmer!"

Dear God, thought Mr. Scott, *I knew there was going to be something really impossible about Leverett. Probably likes hilltops because they draw snakes in hot weather.*

"He didn't charm a real snake, though, Dad, just an old extension cord. He squatted down on the floor—this was after he showed me those crumby arrow heads—and waved his hands back and forth over it and pretty soon the end with the little box on it started to move around on the floor and all of a sudden it lifted up, like a cobra out of a basket. It was real spooky!"

"I've seen that sort of trick," Mr. Scott told Bobby. "There was a fine thread attached to the end of the cord pulling it up."

"I'd have seen a thread, Dad."

"Not if it were the same color

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

as the background," Mr. Scott explained. Then he had a thought. "By the way, Bobby, was the other end of the cord plugged in?"

"Oh it was, Dad! He said he couldn't work the trick unless there was electricity in the cord. Because you see, Dad, he's really an electricity-charmer. I just said snake-charmer to make it more exciting. Afterwards we went outside and he charmed electricity down out of the wires and made it crawl all over his body. You could see it crawl from part to part."

"But how could you see that?" Mr. Scott demanded, struggling to keep his voice casual. He had a vision of Mr. Leverett standing dry and sedate, entwined by glimmering blue serpents with flashing diamond eyes and fangs that sparked.

"By the way it would make his hair stand on end, Dad. First on one side of his head, then on the other Then he said, 'Electricity, crawl down my chest,' and a silk handkerchief hanging out of his top pocket stood out stiff and sharp. Dad, it was almost as good as the Museum of Science and Industry!"

Next day Mr. Scott dropped by Peak House, but he got no chance to ask his carefully thought-out questions, for Mr. Leverett greeted him with, "Reckon your boy told you about the little magic show I put on for him yesterday. I like children, Mr. Scott. Good Republican children like yours, that is."

"Why yes, he did," Mr. Scott admitted, disarmed and a bit flustered by the other's openness.

"I only showed him the simplest tricks, of course. Kid stuff."

"Of course," Mr. Scott echoed. "I guessed you must have used a fine thread to make the extension cord dance."

"Reckon you know all the answers, Mr. Scott," the other said, his eyes flashing. "But come across to the patio and sit for a while."

The buzzing was quite loud that day, yet after a bit Mr. Scott had to admit to himself that it *was* a restful sound. And it had more variety than he'd realized—mounting crackles, fading sizzles, hisses, hums, clicks, sighs. If you listened to it long enough, you probably would begin to hear voices.

Mr. Leverett, silently rocking, said, "Electricity tells me about all the work it does and all the fun it has—dances, singing, big crackling band concerts, trips to the stars, foot races that make rockets seem like snails. Worries, too. You know that electric breakdown they had in New York? Electricity told me why. Some of its folks went crazy—overwork, I guess—and just froze. It was a while before they could send others in from outside New York and heal the crazy ones and start them moving again through the big copper web. Electricity tells me it's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fearful the same thing's going to happen in Chicago and San Francisco. Too much pressure.

"Electricity doesn't *mind* working for us. It's generous-hearted and it loves its job. But it would be grateful for a little more consideration—a little more recognition of its special problems.

"It's got its savage brothers to contend with, you see—the wild electricity that rages in storms and haunts the mountaintops and comes down to hunt and kill. Not civilized like the electricity in the wires, though it will be some day.

"For civilized electricity's a great teacher. Shows us how to live clean and in unity and brother-love. Power fails one place, electricity's rushing in from everywhere to fill the gap. Serves Georgia same as Vermont, Los Angeles same as Boston. Patriotic too—only revealed its greatest secrets to true-blue Americans like Edison and Franklin. Did you know it killed a Swede when he tried that kite trick? Yep, electricity's the greatest power for good in all the U.S.A."

Mr. Scott thought sleepily of what a neat little electricity cult Mr. Leverett could set up, every bit as good as Mind Science or the swami that got blown up with dynamite. He could imagine the patio full of earnest seekers while Krishna Leverett—or maybe High Electro Leverett—dispensed wisdom from his rocker, interpreting the words of the humming wires. Better not suggest it, though—in Southern California such things sometimes had a way of coming true.

Mr. Scott felt quite easy at heart as he went down the hill, though he did make a point of telling Bobby not to bother Mr. Leverett any more. The old man seemed harmless enough, still . . .

But the prohibition didn't apply to himself. During the next months Mr. Scott made a point of dropping in at Peak House from time to time for a dose of "electric wisdom." He came to look forward to these restful, amusingly screwy breaks in the hectic round. Mr. Leverett appeared to do nothing whatever except sit in his rocker in the patio, yet stayed happy and serene. There was a lesson for anybody in that, if you thought about it.

Occasionally Mr. Scott spotted amusing side effects of Mr. Leverett's eccentricity. For instance, although he sometimes let the gas and water bills go, he always paid up phone and electricity on the dot.

And the newspapers eventually did report short but severe electric breakdowns in Chicago and San Francisco. Smiling a little frowningly at the coincidences, Mr. Scott decided he could add fortune-telling to the electricity cult he'd imaged for Mr. Leverett.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Your life's story foretold in the wires!"—more novel, anyway, than crystal balls or Talking with God.

Only once did the touch of the gruesome, that had troubled Mr. Scott in his first conversation with Mr. Leverett, come briefly back, when the old man chuckled and observed, "Recall what I told you about whipping a copper wire up there? I've thought of a simpler way, just squirt the hose at those H-T lines in a hard stream, gripping the metal nozzle. Might be best to use the hot water and throw a box of salt in the heater first." When Mr. Scott heard that he was glad that he'd warned Bobby against coming around.

But for the most part Mr. Leverett maintained his mood of happy serenity.

When the break in that mood came, it was suddenly, though afterwards Mr. Scott realized there had been one warning note sounded when Mr. Leverett had added onto a rambling discourse, "By the way, I've learned that U.S. power electricity goes all over the world, just like the ghost electricity in radios and phones. It travels to foreign shores in batteries and condensors. Roams the lines in Europe and Asia. Some of it even slips over into Soviet territory. Wants to keep tab on the Communists, I guess. Electric freedom-fighters."

On his next visit Mr. Scott found a great change. Mr. Leverett had deserted his rocking chair to pace the patio on the side away from the pole, though every now and then he would give a quick funny look up over his shoulder at the dark muttering wires.

"Glad to see you, Mr. Scott. I'm real shook up. Reckon I better tell someone about it so if something happens to me they'll be able to tell the FBI. Though I don't know what *they'll* be able to do.

"Electricity just told me this morning it's got a world government—it had the nerve to call it that—and that there's Russian electricity in our wires and American electricity in the Soviets'—it shifts back and forth with never a quiver of shame. It doesn't have a spark of feeling for the U.S.A. *or* for Russia. It thinks only of itself.

"When I heard that you could have knocked me down with a paper dart.

"What's more, electricity's determined to stop any big war that may come, no matter how rightful that war be or how much in defense of America. It doesn't care a snap about us—it just doesn't want its webs and waterholes destroyed. If the buttons are pushed for the atomic missiles—here *or* in Russia—it'll flash out and kill anybody who tries to set them off another way.

"I pleaded with electricity, I told it I'd always thought of it as American and true—reminded it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of Franklin and Edison—finally I commanded it to change its ways and behave decent, but it just chuckled.

"Then it threatened me back! It told me if I tried to stop it, if I revealed its plans, it would summon down its savage brothers from the mountains and with their help it would seek me out and kill me! Mr. Scott, I'm all alone up here with electricity on my window sill. What am I going to do?"

Mr. Scott had considerable difficulty soothing Mr. Leverett enough to make his escape. In the end he had to promise to come back in the morning bright and early—silently vowing to himself that he'd be damned if he would.

His task was not made easier when the electricity overhead, which had been especially noisy this day, rose in a growl and Mr. Leverett turned and said harshly, "Yes, I hear!"

That night the Los Angeles area had one of its rare thunderstorms, accompanied by gales of wind and torrents of rain. Palms and pines and eucalyptus were torn down, earth cliffs crumbled and sloshed, and the great square concrete spillways ran brimful from the hills to the sea.

The lightning was especially fierce. Several score Angelinos, to whom such a display was a novelty, phoned civil defense numbers to report or inquire fearfully about atomic attacks.

Numerous freak accidents occured. To the scene of one of these Mr. Scott was summoned next morning bright and early by the police, because it had occurred on a property he rented and because he was the only person known to be acquainted with the deceased.

The previous night Mr. Scott had awakened at the height of the storm when the lightning had been blinding as a photoflash and the thunder had cracked like a mile long whip just above the roof. At that time he had remembered vividly what Mr. Leverett had said about electricity threatening to summon its wild giant brothers from the hills. But now, in the bright morning, he decided not to tell the police about that or say anything to them at all about Mr. Leverett's electricity mania—it would only complicate things to no purpose and perhaps make the fear at his heart more crazily real.

Mr. Scott saw the scene of the freak accident before anything was moved, even the body—except there was now, of course, no power in the heavy corroded wire wrapped tight as a bullwhip around the skinny shanks with only the browned and blackened fabric of cotton pajamas between.

The police and the power-and-light men reconstructed the accident this way: At the height of the storm one of the high-tension lines had snapped a hundred feet away from the house and the near end,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

whipped by the wind and its own tension, had struck back freakishly through the open bedroom window of Peak House and curled once around the legs of Mr. Leverett, who had likely been on his feet at the time. He had been killed instantly.

One had to strain that reconstruction, though, to explain the additional freakish elements in the accident—the fact that the high-tension wire had struck not only through the bedroom window, but then through the bedroom door to catch the old man in the hall, and that the black shiny cord of the phone was wrapped like a vine twice around the old man's right arm, as if to hold him back from escaping until the big wire had struck.

Through Time And Space With Ferdinand Feghoot: XLIX

Ferdinand Feghoot not only shared the hardships of General Washington's soldiers at Valley Forge, but he managed to protect his fellow Time Watcher, Coop-Major Leghorn Gallinorum, from their hunger. Feghoot was disguised as a volunteer Neapolitan officer; the Coop-Major, a telepathic mutant rooster from the 43rd Century, as a gamecock. They were watching for a British sympathizer who, along that time-line, was due to make an attempt on Washington's life.

Finally, late in February, Baron von Steuben summoned Feghoot excitedly. "Ach!" he cried out. "In der bones I haff der stranche feeling—Vashington iss in dancher!"

Responding immediately, Feghoot's colleague began searching the area where the Baron felt especially uneasy, and very promptly he discovered the culprit, cunningly hidden in an old cider press.

When the man had been led off to court-martial, they settled down to their evening meal of boiled boot-tops and birchbark; and von Steuben, looking hungrily at the Coop-Major and licking his chops, sighed that there was nothing he missed as much as old-fashioned Italian cooking. "Donnerwetter!" he exclaimed. "I vould giff anything for pollo al burro, pollo con funghi, for chust plain pollo!"

"My dear Baron," laughed Ferdinand Feghoot, "have you forgotten your calories, your cholesterol? Don't you realize that you just had a first-rate chicken catch a Tory?"

—GRENDEL BRIARTON (*with thanks to Robert E. Spenger*)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

A further adventure of Davy—who appeared here last month in "The Golden Horn"—as he wanders into the middle of a skirmish between the forces of Skoar and Katskil. . . .

A WAR OF NO CONSEQUENCE

by Edgar Pangborn

I

I SNEAKED PAST THE TOWN green without my usual pause for a glance at the stocks and the pillory; moonlight was dimming under a milky fog, and anyway I had no wish to look at those things that night. Something was moaning and grumbling to itself in the baiting-pit at the edge of the green, probably a bear who'd be used up soon in some entertainment, maybe the Spring Festival. I wasn't stopping for that either, but went on down Kurin Street, which belonged by day to Skoar's small tradesmen and by night to the cats and pariah dogs, as far as an alley I remembered. It would bring me out near a certain part of the city's stockade but not too near. More than an hour before I'd left a man lying there, a poor dumb city guard who took me for a Katskil spy, or said he did when he was roughing me up. It was actually the first time I'd heard there was another war on between my country and Katskil; the last one had happened before I was born, and I'd supposed the new one was nothing more than grown folks' yak. A stupid business—the guard had his foot working on my belly, I got mad, grabbed it and heaved, his head loaded with a brass helmet clanged against a log of the stockade, and he stretched out flat with a broken neck.

I knew nobody in Katskil, hadn't ever traveled. He could have listened. I'd simply been off in the woods of North Mountain, thinking about running away from a life I hated. My mind was nearly made up, but I needed to come back and say good-bye to my girl. It was important: I'd never said good-bye to her in just that way before. But then as I came slipping over the city stockade with not much room in my head for anything but Emmia Robson, that guard got me, and I got him.

Since he was dead, and saying

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I was sorry wouldn't help, I did go on all the way back to say good-bye to her—across the city to the Bull-and-Iron inn where I was supposed to be working for her father as a bond-servant yard-boy, up through her window by way of a jinny-creeper vine, into her bed. Sweet and sad and important. I had said good-bye to Emmia only once—she not yet knowing it was good-bye—when her plump fingers wandering over my throat discovered I wasn't wearing my luck-charm. Now there was just one place I could have lost it—where that guard threw me and rolled me in the dirt. Yes, a stupid business. After that, it had to be truly good-bye. The Skoar policers would easily identify the charm by finding people who'd seen me wear it, and they wouldn't be interested in hearing how I never meant to kill the poor sod. At fourteen I considered myself too young to hang. Still do, by the way.

The alley off Kurin Street was narrow, black and foul. Something soft slithered under my foot, not alive. Whatever it was—dog, pig, cat—the Skoar Scavengers' Guild would take care of it in a week or so, when it was ripe enough to annoy the policers in their two-man rounds of this district. I don't know why that detail sticks with me now. In later years, when I'd got myself slightly educated and was living in Old City of Nuin where the streets are clean, such a thing would have angered and disgusted me. But I was Skoar bred and born, totally illiterate and thinking it only natural that reading and writing, whatever they were, should be mysteries reserved to the priests. Full of other educational crud too. Being Skoar-born meant being hardened to the general grubbiness and slackness of a place where the people are mostly bone-lazy and seldom happy enough to take pride in the way they live.

Looking back, I don't blame Skoar too much. It was a border town in a hot climate, and poor. Small snarling wars between Moha and Katskil had swept back and forth across it for over a hundred years. The few industries Moha had were up in the north, at Moha City and Kanhar on Moha Water, and in a couple of second-rate ports on the Hudson Sea. Since there was little enough in Skoar to make young people want to stay, I dare say they'd always been running off when they saw a chance, as I was about to do now, which left the city to the unambitious, the slobs, the politickers and the priests and the few ancient aristocratic families who ran things as much as the Church would let them. The proportion of mue-births was no higher in Skoar than anywhere else, but I recall the Mourners' Guild made a more noisy thing of it than in other lands I've visit-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ed. The Mourners' Guild, in case you don't have any such in your part of the world, is an outfit of professional singers and wailers who move in on a family that's had a mue-birth and set up a pious uproar for a few days—occasionally there's a real singer in the lot, so it may not be too bad. The object, they say, is to comfort and appease the spirit of the mue by lamenting a bit more elaborately than people would be expected to do at the death of a real human being, after the priests have disposed of the mue's body in the necessary way. The family has to pay the Guild, of course, but in Moha the poor families were let off easy, sometimes even got it for free by proving themselves paupers—in many respects Skoar's an easygoing place.

When my foot slipped on that carrion in the alley I merely cussed and groped on with my hands out in front of me, till I could see a lightening of the darkness ahead. I heard a dull commotion of voices to my left, by the stockade. Sticking my head out at the end of the alley, I also caught a glimmer of torchlight.

They'd found him.

Moonlight was still abroad in the sky, but that fog was deepening and might be much heavier by morning, a spring fog, brought on by a cool night after a hot day. The policers—or they might have been soldiers of the Skoar garrison but I think not—were talking low-toned; what they said wasn't likely to give me much I didn't know. I could take it for granted they'd found my luck-charm. I slipped off in the other direction down the road that ran all around the city just inside the stockade, until the curve of it hid their torchlight. Then I crossed the road and scrambled up the log barrier, trying not to hurry. I wasn't familiar with this section of the stockade. Dropping outside, I landed in a thorny thicket, with some noise. The policers wouldn't hear it, but their dogs might, if they had them. Evidently they hadn't, since nothing happened. All the same I froze a while, hearing a horned owl far off in the woods reciting his own thoughts of death and hunger.

Policer dogs—why, come daylight they'd bring them around outside the place where the guard had died, to cast about for my scent, which they would find. Then they might follow it all the way to a cave on the east shoulder of North Mountain, which had been mine by right of secret discovery and possession for a good while, and near which I'd hidden a certain treasure I couldn't leave behind.

My treasure was a golden horn of Old Time. It had been in the possession of a wilderness mue, a poor desolate distorted thing who dared to make his presence known

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to me up there in the woods of North Mountain. The laws of Moha and other lands say that such beings must be killed on sight. I couldn't kill him, but I did steal the horn. Then because my heart hurt me about it, I tried to return it to him, but he was dead, and the horn was mine—never mind all that, I've written of it in another place, and it's no credit to me the way I won my golden horn. But the horn was mine, buried up there near my cave, and I would not go without it.

I knew almost nothing then about how to play it. When I play it nowadays, I could make you laugh or cry or rejoice—no matter, I still know little enough. I only grope at the edges of the art of music they knew in Old Time when the horn was made, an art now nearly lost except for a few Old-Time songs that people sing occasionally, not even understanding that they belong to another world.

There was one brook to cross on the mountainside between Skoar and my cave, a hasty stream nowhere wide or deep. It wouldn't confuse the scent-trail for the policer-dogs, because when I came down that night I'd merely stepped across it, not walking any distance in the water. Now the brook might help me find part of my way in the dark, if I had the guts to try it. It flowed into the city under the stockade, not far from this thicket where I'd tumbled. I could follow it upstream for about a mile, to a willow I thought I could find and recognize at night; then at least I'd be that much further along my way at first-light.

I heard no more of the men's voices as I inched out of the thornbushes and cut across partly open grassland that lay between the city and the beginning of the North Mountain forest. Trying in fog and darkness to hold a straight line that would bring me to the brook, I had to move with dismal slowness. I don't remember too much fog of fear in my mind, but the short journey was an experience outside of time. During what may have been ten or fifteen minutes, I walked a thousand years. Then hearing at last the mumbling wet monotone of the brook, I returned abruptly to a place and time-scheme I knew, in a kind of waking. A big frog jumped and ploshed from blackness to blackness unseen, less startled than I was and maybe less afraid.

Struggling upstream with no guide except the feel of rushing water was a different nightmare. Instead of too much time, I imagined there was not enough, yet I knew it was dangerous to hurry. The brook itself was shallow and moderate; at the small rapids and waterfalls I only needed to step out on the bank and keep the noise of the stream at my left until it changed back to the sound

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of easier flow. But I could lose my footing and brain myself on a rock. I could step on a black water-snake—moksins they call that kind in my home country, fat and timid and sluggish, not as bad as rattlers or the copper-snakes because they can't bite so well, but bad enough. My smell could reach black wolf anywhere in the night, and he could come take me before I had time to free the knife I carried under my shirt. Spring is the season too when the bear are thin and hungry, their males edgy with the beginning of the sex fret and sometimes in a mood to kill for the pleasure of it, as they say the great brown bear of the northern countries may do at any time.

Or I could walk innocently by one of brown tiger's favorite drinking holes and save him a lot of trouble, never being aware of it until it was too late to be aware of anything. A man's a small thing in the dark.

The mosquitos found me. I didn't dare slap, but only rubbed at them, which doesn't help much. You know, I happened to arrive at my heresies by a different route, but I'd think a mosquito you can't slap would go a long way toward making an atheist out of anybody, unless he *wants* to believe in a God who'd invent that type of insect for the fun of it. The owl had ceased hooting, or floated farther away so that his outrageous talk was covered by the brook's midnight music. I halted now and then to listen for his or other cries. There's no mistaking the cold long howl of black wolf for the noise of the grays. Nobody minds the grays too much. I heard neither that night. It was a hushed time, a whole world deep in fog, and though at fourteen I knew well enough that most of my worst troubles were yet ahead of me, the thought was never too sharp that night. Nothing was sharp. Fog . . .

In perhaps an hour I found the willow tree waiting for me, its lower branches trailing to the water, giving me a scratchy kiss of welcome and reassurance. I could see nothing of course. Here there was darkness of forest as well as of night, old forest where moonlight would always have been a some-time thing even when the air was clear; I knew the fog had deepened only because of the damp smell and a thickness in my breathing. But my fingers told me these were willow leaves, and followed them along a twisting of twigs to little branches, then to the larger branches, finding at length one whose curve I remembered from daylight times, a branch that fitted my hand and was strong enough to bear my weight. I hoisted myself from the water and climbed with a dream's slowness, cautious still at the edge

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of exhaustion. High up in the willow, I took off my loin-rag and passed it around the trunk, tying it at my middle. Too tired to know or care what comfort was, I collapsed into a sort of sleep, with no images that I remember.

Damn a beetle. I hate beetles. They get up too early in the morning and there's neither humor nor kindness in them, not a trace. Work all day long—bad as an ant that way—not a smile for anybody, and when they sleep at night, if they do, it must be like the sleep of a clock with the spring run down. I won't say they haven't got brains. If they hadn't, how would they know for instance which are the parts of you that you can't reach for to scratch? They do. I think some low-living miz'able great-grandfather beetle reasoned it out away back in the labyrinths of forgotten time, and passed it on so it's come down through the ages to his twelve billion grandchildren, for to this day that's the part of you, south of the ribs and north of the rump, where any beetle will go immediately, to tromple on you, and scrape, and tickle, and chew out free samples, and call his God-damn bald-headed cousins to come look what he found. All the more certainly, if you happen to be stuck in a tree-crotch with an ache in every bone and no inclination to scratch your back if you could. Notice this too: I never met a beetle, and don't hope to, who showed any reasonable liking for me. Contempt is what they show, contempt. I've known a beetle stare me right in the eye with a hunk of my hide hanging from his jaws, and I knew simply from the look on his stupid face that he was comparing me with other meals and finding fault with everything about me—too salt, too gamy, needed more sass, something. It wasn't any use, you know—he wouldn't have liked me if I'd spiced my rear and put butter on it. Well then, I contemptify 'em right back. I hate beetles. Damn a beetle anyhow.

Same thing goes double for ants, except I've got less respect for them, after once watching a whole gang of the idiots, loaded with dead spiders and left-over wings and daddy-long-legses with parts missing and such like second-hand loot, go marching all the way to the top of a goldenrod and down the other side just because the one in the lead said so, when even a city alderman would have had the sense to walk around it.

I'm not grateful to the beetle who jerked me out of my weary half-sleep that morning while the sky was still dark. The faintest touch of first-light would have waked me. As it was, all I could do was fidget and scratch, or try to scratch, try also not to think

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

too much about danger and loneliness and fear, or about Emmia Robson whom I'd probably never see again, and wait until the fog was dimly gray and it was possible to glimpse the branches of the willow a few feet from my eyes.

It reached that stage at last, though I knew the fog might remain for most of the morning. I let myself down through the milk-soft confusion and pushed on up the mountainside. I could look doubtfully eight or ten feet ahead, and pick out specially remembered places—odd-looking rocks, dips and rises of the ground, scratches of squirrel-holes or knobby spots on the tree-trunks—that were trail-marks for me but wouldn't be for anyone else. I don't know why anyone with eyes and a memory should need to blaze a trail for himself.

In that fog, however, it did take me half an hour to win my way up to the cave. By that time I was cruelly hungry. The fog was already thinning off slightly, under pressure of an invisible sun. I couldn't afford the time to hunt, just gathered my things and made ready to leave.

Except for the horn, I hadn't much. Ten dollars buried near the cave; with another five knotted into my loin-rag, that represented more than a couple of years' savings from my bond-servant work at the Bull-and-Iron. It would help, as soon as I dared show myself in some place where money mattered. In the cave I had fish-lines with two genuine steel hooks, a flint-and-steel, a burning-glass, and a good ash bow I'd made myself—short for ease in carrying but with power enough to settle a deer. Half a dozen arrows, two of them steel-tipped, the others brass-headed but satisfactory for small stuff. That was it. I could get along.

I missed my luck-charm. But I recall thinking, as I dug up my golden horn and my shoulder-sack that was wrapped around it, how the charm hadn't done anything about my heavy bad luck of the day before; it was even the final cause of my being on the run. I went so far as to wonder whether all luck-charms might be nothing but a chunk of mahooha.

Of course I was still pretty religious and not ready for such reflections; still that idea got strengthened right away, for just as I'd slung the sack over my shoulder, feeling the hard splendid shape of the horn through the cloth, along comes a little wild hen foolishly hunting her breakfast of bugs not twenty yards away. My arrow took her head off neatly at the neck—she'd never miss it. I've heard say those chickens are descended from tame ones that took to the wilderness long ago, maybe during the Years of Confusion. It makes sense:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they're hardly different from the domestic kind except for smaller size and wildness; just as good eating—or better, since they don't live off garbage—and not much more brains. I couldn't make a fire to cook this one, but I drank the blood and dressed her off, burying the entrails in the hole where my horn had lain, and ate the heart and liver and gizzard raw. It braced me up. A stroke of pure good luck, you see, with no plague-take-it luck-charm getting any of the credit.

The nearest stream sprang out of a cliffside on the northeast slope of the mountain and tumbled off toward a region I'd never investigated. The brook was swift and loud with many rapids, troublesome alders and brambles on the banks. So far as I could guess, it must run two or three miles through the forest until at some point it crossed the one road that ran northeast out of Skoar, a trade and travel road pretty well patrolled. I couldn't risk any road near the city, unless maybe at night, but I might use it for a guide. Northeast was my desire, for Levannon lay that way, a nation where a youth, I'd heard, might sign on with one of the big thirty-tonners that sail the northern route through Moha Water and the Ontara and Lorenta Seas to the ports of Nuin on the great sea that's said to reach the rim of the world—yes, and he could be long gone, and make a fortune, and maybe some day sail out on the great sea as no one had ever done. So much for a dream that had been burning in me a while, but it was no dream that I was on my way—somewhere.

The brook turned out to be a scratchy tunnel, a little gray-green hell. On account of the dogs, I had to use it for what it was worth. I'd stuffed my moccasins in the sack to save them, as I'd done the night before in that other brook. My bare feet took a beating on the stones.

Of course when the dogs lost the scent, the men would use their heads a little, and follow the brook with the dogs nosing along on both banks—considering the mess of briers, I wished them joy of it. I had another idea about that too. At a break in the tangle where brambles gave way to grass and weeds, I stepped out on the right bank and walked away from the brook, as if I'd given up flight and started back toward Skoar. I took care to pass within reach of a spreading oak I'd noticed, and went a good way past it, into a thicket where I tramped things to make it interesting. Then I back-tracked to the oak and swung up into it, careful to leave no damaged twigs or other signs. From the oak it was possible, by risking one difficult

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

jump forty feet above ground, to pass over into a neighboring gum tree. The rest of the route was simple, branch to branch all the way back to the brook.

I could hope they'd waste some time beating their gums before they caught on to what I'd done, if they ever did. Maybe they'd figure I was a demon, or in league with demons, and send back for a priest to help them louse it up. Policers have no love for wilderness if I know the breed, and I think I do. All the same I splashed on another half-mile along that brook, and when I left it I did so by way of the trees again. I swung and scrambled from tree to tree until I reached another oak, far from the stream, that looked good to me. There I climbed as high as I could without getting too much into the open, too visible, and through the leaves I studied the surrounding country.

No more fog. High clouds rolling eastward, making the sun vanish and reappear—jumpy weather, a nervous wind now and then stirring my oak with a sultry breath.

I'd been right about the road, except that it was nearer than I'd thought. A red gash in the landscape showed up half a mile away, more north than east, where the road approached and passed over a rise of the ground—red clay, likely still muddy with spring dampness. Though the road was empty to the eye, I heard faint sounds—very faint, unfamiliar, troubling.

I turned my head and half shut my eyes to listen better, but learned nothing. Then I realized I was staring at another section of what must be the same road, down on my right, startlingly near my oak. I don't think it was more than two hundred feet off, a place where trees and bushes grew thinner, revealing a short stretch of gray gravel with only a little of the red clay. That part of the road was empty too, no danger at the moment, but I didn't like it, and wormed around till most of me was behind the trunk of the oak.

Those sounds were remote enough, whatever they might be. A kind of dry murmur not suggesting voices, and with a certain beat in it. Something like the sound of a pulse in your ears. I tried to think it was that, but couldn't fool myself so. A pulse wouldn't have made my skin crawl.

I loosened an end of my loin-rag, cut it off with my knife and tied the free piece around my head. I should have thought of that sooner. The cloth was a dull gray. I don't mind being red-haired, but it's not helpful when you want to look like a piece of bark.

While I was busy with that, something had appeared on the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

distant road and now stood there, a dot of life between me and the uneasy sky. Even at a great distance a human being seldom looks like any other animal. I couldn't make out much of this one except his humanity, his watchful stillness under the intermittent sun. I supposed he was studying the road in my direction. This noise that had bothered me ceased while he paused there. Then I saw his tiny arm swing up and out and forward, and the noise started up again.

I think men must have used that signal from most ancient times, when they've wanted to say "Come on ahead!" and there's been some good strong reason why they don't care to shout.

II

He walked forward. At first he was followed by only a few like himself, walking apart, spread out thinly along the road and moving with the long-legged stride of men used to extended journeys with light burdens. Advance-guard scouts they were, though I didn't understand that at once and thought foolishly, Is that all?

The sound grew stronger. The first horsemen appeared over the rise. Feet of men and horses—no other noise in the world is like it, whether they are marching in rhythm or merely walking along in broken step as these men were. This was no parade. The helmets and other brass-work were dulled, by intent I think and not just from road-dust; they wouldn't want a tell-tale glint of the sun.

Noticing that was what made me decide they must be soldiers of Katskil coming to take Skoar, and the notion threw me into a dither of panic and trouble. For surely the only right and honorable thing for me to do was to run down the road—after all I had a half-mile start—and warn the city. Fifteen minutes, even ten, could make a difference.

I thought, What in hell did Skoar ever do for me?

The mounted soldiers were few —twenty or thirty, I think— walking slower than the horses liked, on tight reins. The massed foot-soldiers came then, in red-brown jackets and brown pants, short spears at the shoulders, bows slung, swords at the side.

For that matter, what had the nation of Moha ever done for me?—misery mostly, stupid laws that made me a less than human thing, a bond-servant who with the greatest luck just might be able to pay off the bond some time in the next ten years, and win the privilege of voting for the same laws and the same politickers.

There was Emmia. She would be soldiers' meat, if she lived.

I got ready to slide down the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oak, and then I saw something that was like a sudden breath of cool air on a sweltering day. A special group of men off there, without spears, surrounding something bright and splendid in white and blue and gold that streamed backward on the air as they marched.

Oh, even I knew that the Katskil flag was black and scarlet. This was our flag of Moha, and these were our men, coming not to take the city but protect it. So I could lounge in my oak and enjoy my patriotism without a lick of work. Now that was happiness. Like falling out of a tree and not quite breaking your neck.

I heard no footsteps of those advance scouts approaching the section of road near my tree, but I knew they must be near it by now. I climbed down until a wall of leaves almost completely shut the road away, nothing for me to watch but a patch or two of gray gravel, my body well hidden on the far side of the trunk. A man would need to be uncommonly sharp, and know exactly where to look, to spot any glint of my eyes observing him.

I began to hear the horses. They were quiet on the soft ground of the road. The separate scouts were the only men who worried me, for they would be sure to glance into the trees from time to time. Those following them wouldn't—people seldom look upward, I've noticed, unless their attention is specially drawn. I glimpsed the quiet passage of the first scout, and drew back completely behind the tree-trunk. Then as the hoof-sounds grew plain and close, I dared lean forward to look again, and watched the whole mounted detachment go by. I counted thirty-six.

Fine horses of light build, clean lines, all black or gray or roan. Trained for quiet and precision—no neighing or blowing or acting up; they knew this wasn't a parade. Such horses are bred in western Moha, I suppose the most beautiful product of my native land. Bershar and Levannon are famous for horses too, but those are the mountain type—not so handsome but tougher, and steadier in a crisis.

These horsemen were mostly young, well set up, their faces seeming much alike to my limited view. They would own their horses and gear: the aristocracy goes for the cavalry, with a lot of ritual and circumstance. These boys—you could tell it from the swing of their shoulders—knew they were the cream of the crop and had a good thing. They thought horse and lived horse. Most of them would make a career of it, pleasant in peacetime with fun and privileges, something nice in politics or respectable loafing when they got too old to ride for the army. It made a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

grand military picture; it was also a weakness. They wouldn't dream of riding or owning any horses except the beautiful breed of western Moha—hell, I'd just as soon send a girl into battle. Those nags are like that, high-strung, too attached to their owners, their action depending on the rider's firmness. Let him get hit or tumble from his mount, and our Moha beauties go all to pieces just like hysterical women. They won't stand, and any thinking they do for themselves is skittish and wild as the wind.

There was no smiling or talk among the horsemen this morning, only a controlled tension and readiness—orders, I guess. For nearly all of them—they were that young—it was their first war.

That wouldn't have been true of the foot-soldiers who came after them. Much older on the average, some of them scarred, hard-case types, used to road marches on poor rations, the yowling of sergeants and the discipline of the bull whip. Others were clods in uniform, ex-slaves, street trash, what little good sense they had all banged into them from the outside. No aristocrats in that lot: they were for the dirty work and the uncelebrated dying. Another weakness of Moha, in my view. An army of men who think for themselves may be hard to handle, but it does win wars, so far as any army ever does.

I looked off at the distant part of the road. Men were still coming, a second mounted detachment just then appearing over the rise. I thought it might be a rear guard, and as it happened I was wrong. But I hadn't time to speculate about it, for as the first dozen horsemen of that new group started down the stretch of red clay, hell was loose up there, and a trumpet screamed.

The Katskil battalion had kept out of sight in the bush until about half of our Moha men had gone by. Then they stabbed at the center of the long weak line. We blundered; we should have had scouts on the flanks, of course. Maybe some fool thought the forest was too thick for an army to enter it. Now that the trap was sprung, the forward part of the Moha army doubling back to help—if it did—would have the hill to climb and the morning sun slanting across their eyes.

Katskil—(I'll tell you presently how I come to know all this)—had been holding that ambush all night, deep in the forest tangle. There'd been sharp intelligence work too, learning what kind and how many of our men were on the way, and what part of the bottleneck they'd be passing through in the morning hours.

For that matter, nearly the whole damned road was a bottle-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

neck. A military road, but nobody bothered to trim back the forest and weeds in peacetime. A military road, designed—so far as it had any design—by the military mind, which likes to make provision for everything except the fact that the enemy sometimes has brains too. That's what I've heard generals call an Incalculable Factor, which means that they aren't to be criticized for leaving it to God.

Katskil's first stroke was a flight of arrows from both sides of the road. I knew that, in my oak tree, as soon as I saw men falling from their mounts, the horses losing training at once, plunging here and there and throwing the whole detachment into a mess. No sound had reached me yet from up there except that cry of the trumpet. It still rang in my ears, three short notes and a long blast. Not music but a shriek, and I knew without thinking that it was more than a warning. It was a desperate recall of the men who had gone on ahead.

They'd heard it sure enough, those foot-soldiers on the section of road near to me. Through the leaves I saw faces gone blank and silly with shock, faces not wanting to understand. Someone yelped "Skoar!" A wave of cursing and shouting and yattering followed that, up and down the road on both sides of the small region I could watch. A young voice from much farther away on my right cut through it, high with fury and excitement: "Get back up there! They need us. Move, you lard-belly sons of bitches, move!"

Up there, uhha, but just looking at it practically, what was in it for them? Why, up there half a mile away men in dark green were pouring out of the woods, and cutting loose with the shrill Katskil yell that now reached me as clearly as the trumpet. As if the forest's own body had come awake with sword and spear and javelin, to squeeze itself shut on the confusion of men and horses in the road. And the rear detachment of the foot-soldiers of Moha was spilling over the rise. It looked to me as though the poor yucks were arriving still in marching line-up—stepping off a cliff in a dignified manner.

Yet there weren't so many of those dark green uniforms after all. I saw no more of them coming—no telling what might be happening in the region between me and the ridge, where tree-tops shut away my vision—and I did see a number of them fallen, out at the rim of the battle. Our newcomers might have stepped off a cliff, but they lit fighting. Up there they did.

On the road near me it was all a flurry of panic and indecision and shouts of "Skoar! To Skoar!"

The flag of Moha reappeared, climbing the rise—far off, living

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and magnificent. The men of the color guard weren't milling and whimpering and hankering after the city's comfortable walls. Even now I'm still puzzled to know why a bond-servant yard-boy, running away from his native land in disgust and fright, should have shivered and gulped down tears of awe and pride, merely to see how the color guard of Moha knew where to go. Yes, it climbed the rise, that white and blue and gold, and a wave of dark green flowed down to meet it, and the trumpet cried again.

But where I was—oh, that was disgrace and nastiness, on the near section of the road. One flash of action I saw. A young cavalryman shot by, toward the battle, and as he passed he swung the flat of his sword across an open mouth that was yelling "Skoar!" The mouth yelled a moment longer, without words, the horseman was gone. Three others followed him, and no more. Then the foot-soldiers, our Moha men, were running, the wrong way. All of them, it seemed. A curiously slow run, a sort of shamble, like the running of sick men.

It was my patriotism. I wasn't thinking. I pulled out my golden horn, and forty feet above them in the leaves, I blew the same call the trumpet had given, with all the power I had. Nay, I blew it three times, the second time on a higher note, and again, higher and louder yet. Then I looked down.

Oh, I was safe. No one glanced my way. The sound would have seemed to come from all around them, or from within them, and such a sound as their lives had never known. They were not running now. They were turned the right way, and staring back up the road in total silence. No more yelling. No sound at all. Therefore I blew the call once more, not loudly this time but gently, pleadingly, as the men of their own kind up on the hill might have said simply to them: "We are in trouble."

I heard one sound in answer, as if they had all released their breath in the same instant. And one voice, from beyond my sight one of the cavalry, I think called out without anger: "All right, boys, let's go up yonder and take them!"

Our men of Moha were running again, the right way.

Sure, Moha won a dazzling victory that day, history says. Or somebody did. I saw it happen.

When I looked up from putting the horn away in the sack, the brave color guard was completely surrounded and cruelly beset. They were only a dozen men, lightly armed with sword and javelin, who had formed a ring to protect the standard-bearer, and as the ring was made

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

smaller by death it held its shape somehow, while the outer circle of dark green pressed steadily inward. I could not count how many of the color guard were left standing, nor indeed make them out at all except as tiny shapes with a glitter of sun on steel.

That struggle for the flag had edged over to one side of the road, but I no longer saw any red clay, for it was covered, all hidden by a heaving confusion of brown and dark green uniforms, and the many who were now lying still on the earth. Above, near the crest of the rise, the demoralized cavalry unit was yet trying to get back into some order, while the Katskil soldiers darted in and out—I could hear the horses screaming. Two or three of them, riderless, dashed blindly into the woods.

It was bad. But our men of Moha who had been on the edge of panic flight a moment before were swarming up the road. I knew that. I had a moment of feeling absurdly sorry for the Katskil fighters because they might not know it yet. Then our men arrived.

The horsemen were first of course—up the hill in a roaring charge, crashing into the green circle around the color guard and scattering it into random flying shards like a smashed wheel. The foot-soldiers followed in a moment, swords and javelins flashing. The swords were soon dropping and rising, though or y my mind could hear the crush ng of steel on flesh.

My eyes followed the course of a man in dark green who was fleeing for the woods with three soldiers of Moha after him. He did not turn to fight—I think he had lost his weapons. One javelin took him in the back. The other two Moha soldiers, with a motion that seemed to me strangely deliberate, thrust their swords into him as he lay on the ground, perhaps already dead. I looked away.

That incident might have held my gaze longer than I thought, or maybe I was temporarily faint or sick. When my vision cleared I saw that the Katskil men were all in retreat. The flag of Moha had been carried to the top of the rise and throbbed there in splendor under the wind. The fresh cavalry unit had joined the broken one; there was order in them now. I glimpsed two riders, their captains I guess, conferring on the high ground near our flag. Only the foot-soldiers were chasing the Katskil men into the woods, dirty work for dirty men. The cavalry captains watched them go.

I saw no dark green figures anywhere on the road, except the dead. I remember thinking that the soldiers of Katskil must have been brave men too. Heavily outnumbered apparently, only a small group to begin with, though

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

they had looked numerous in the moment of attack. (A battalion, I later learned, but far below strength; one whole company had been detached for a lesser border raid ten miles to the east—a foolishness on the part of the Katskil brass, and their men paid for it.) Well, we had the victory. I saw one of the cavalry captains take off his cap to wipe his forehead and snap the sweat away from his hand. Then he was making motions I couldn't follow because of the distance, until I saw a tiny drift of gray above his head. He had taken time to fill his pipe, strike flint and have himself a smoke, waiting for the infantry to come back out of the woods.

The infantry had orders—(this also I learned later, and I believe it because the one who told me was a truthful man)—to take no prisoners in the woods, but to bring back evidence that they hadn't been idle. Anything would do—a hand, a head, even a finger. War is a curious occupation. In most of the nations I've visited since these happenings that now seem rather long ago, top military figures usually have an excellent chance at political position and preferment, after the sword is momentarily laid away. By this time, the captain or major who gave that order could be the governor of a district for all I know. Human beings are curious people—nay, I believe that observation's been made before; you may have it free for nothing.

They came back soon, the foot-soldiers. I'm sure it wasn't too inviting there in the heavy woods, where the Katskil men would know the way better than they did, and might be regrouping. But their evidence must have been satisfactory, for the army was soon in motion. I saw a minimum of fuss and shifting about, organizing stretcher bearers for the Moha wounded, and a guard for a limping handful of men in dark green who had been taken prisoner on the road—they'd be slaves for latrine duty in the army barracks, or there might be an aristocrat or two in the lot who was worth a ransom. If any of the Katskil wounded had been officers or aristocrats they would have been placed on litters too; Moha had a reputation for generosity that way; but I saw none. Yes, we were in motion—two battalions, and at full strength before the ambush—and I don't think more than twenty minutes had passed since I'd seen that solitary scout standing against the sky. A skirmish, a trifling encounter—

I caught myself wondering if the war itself was important, and if it was, what made it so. I knew nothing of the cause except that it was a dispute over the national boundary. From all I'd heard in casual talk during my first fourteen years of life, the same dis-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

pute had been going on for fifty or a hundred years, neither side willing to sit down at a table, discuss the damned thing, and decide on something permanent. Neighbors could usually do that, I'd noticed, if they got into an argument over a line fence or patch. But not nations. I know that nations are not people, and no amount of foggy talk can make them so. But they are created by people, people very much like you and me, and there's a rumor abroad that people like you and me occasionally have sense enough to know what we're doing some of the time. It's confusing.

I heard them passing me on the road below. I stayed completely behind the body of my oak, with no desire to look at them. Words floated up to me now and then. "Did y' see the Katty I got, the tall bastard, the one with the beard? My Christ 'n' Abraham, it don't look like they teach 'em to cover the gut ay-tall. Counted on his long reach, all I hadda do was go under it." The words were brag and probably true; the voice was shrill, like that of a man afraid of something or in pain.

Another was crying and petulant. Hearing him up the road was what told me the wounded were being carried by; I did not desire to look. He was asking to see his little sister—they could perfectly well bring her to him, he said, because it was safe here, no damned soldiers around. She was nine years old, he said: they'd know her by her brown hair and brown eyes, the way she wore her hair long to the shoulders, cutest snip in all God's creation. He wouldn't, he said, be giving her any God-damned military secrets, he just wanted to see her. Cutest snip in all God's creation, he said—they could perfectly well bring her here to see him. Then he said a few times: "My head hurts." His voice faded out down the road. I would not look out at them. It was enough. "My head hurts—" and then again, much fainter and farther away under the dull tramp and shuffle of footsteps and occasional clash of steel gear—"My head hurts."

I was waiting for silence. Soon enough it came.

III

I sat listening to the depth of it, that silence. It was an emptiness. I had expected to feel a kind of peace, and I did not.

If there had been any noise of dogs searching out my trail back there in the woods I suppose I would have noticed it—even earlier, during the battle. Some part of me must have been listening, concerned with my own safety. There'd been nothing of the sort; I seemed to be released from the pressure of that fear and perhaps of other fears.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Skoar wouldn't trouble itself at present with a fugitive yard-boy. Skoar would be celebrating the entry of a glorious army, with street crowds and bonfires, churches humming with blessings and thanksgiving hymns, political speakers being trotted out of their stables, taverns and whorehouses getting ready for a long night's work, policers all busy with drunks and brawls and busted heads. I could forget about Skoar.

Yet I had to be practical. Levannon, many long and weary miles to the east—I didn't know how many—was the nation where I wanted to go. Trying to be practical—my mind was still dazed, unreasonably exhausted, unwilling to think straight—I studied what I could see of the countryside from my high place in the oak, searching for a route that would allow me to parallel the road without coming out on it or venturing too near the battlefield where there might have been some guard left behind or camp-followers foraging and looting the dead. I wanted landmarks that I'd be able to find from the ground, but the forest growth was too thick and too evenly spread out, with no great sentinel trees in view except the one where I perched now. So I must go through it blind, trust my sense of direction, maybe now and then angle over to the right far enough to locate the road without blundering out on it. Somewhere, in a hidden ravine or a dense patch of brush, I might chance lighting a tiny fire of dry sticks to cook my hen—raw chicken is discouraging. And I'd go on alone.

I was giving it all a last look, to print the landscape of my memory, when I saw the motion of an arm that should not have moved, on that faraway road. It ought not to have shaken and demoralized me, to see a Katskil soldier who was surely dead raise his arm toward the sky as if wanting to grasp something, and then let it fall over his eyes. It happened slowly, the arm no bigger at that distance than the leg of a fly groping upward, and certainly turning, because I caught a snap of dry brilliance as sunlight touched some metal on his hand, a ring or a bracelet. Then the arm fell. Why, he was like a sleeper troubled by the pressure of light in the midst of some dream, who covered his eyes, maybe in a partial waking and return to sleep.

I thought: No! And I thought: If he's alive now, he won't be in the time it would take me to reach him, even by way of the road. I thought: Man, turn over, turn *away* from the light if it hurts your eyes! And I thought: He's the enemy. He was one of the men who would have taken a share in the sack of Skoar (if we hadn't won a glorious victory)—butchering and raping the helpless, burning houses, dragging the healthier

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

survivors away into the half-death of slavery.

And I found I was wondering about truth and falsehood. All truth and falsehood. For it seemed to me that what I had seen that morning was no-way in accord with the talk of war I had heard as I was growing up. They talked of glory and bravery and patriotism and democracy and national honor, fine ringing words that conveyed a crowd of feelings—feelings but not meaning, if you ever stopped to ask yourself, What are these people actually saying? Glory and bravery—that color guard was brave. So were the men who overcame panic and ran back into the fight when my horn called them. So were the men who lay in ambush through a wilderness night and threw their scanty force against one twice its size. But what was the final quality of glory for the man whose head hurt, and for that sleeper by the road who for some mad reason wouldn't turn his face away from the burden of the light?

As for those enthusiastic civilians with their democracy and national honor, how well would they have shown up on that road this morning?

Garrison soldiers stopped occasionally at the Bull-and-Iron tavern. I couldn't remember hearing them talk about patriotism.

I climbed down from my oak, and worked my way through the brush with my best skill at moving quietly, to that near section of the road. Parting the bushes, I studied everything in sight and found no danger. At my right, leading toward Skoar, the road turned soon and vanished. I saw fresh horse-dung and a few spatters of blood where someone's wound had dripped; that was all. Up the other way, the road ran a little farther before reaching a curve. I ran that way with many a backward glance. Just before the curve I slipped into the roadside bushes, and stole on to a place from which I could peer through the leaves at the next section of the road, which was empty and still.

Here the smell of men and leather and horses and blood was already fainter. The sides of the road were not so densely overgrown, and I could feel a northwest breeze lightly blowing, cleaning the air. I may have wondered what had happened to most of my fears. I stepped out boldly on the road and walked on.

It seemed long, before the gravel and dark earth under my feet altered to red clay, but it really was not. With all the tree-hidden turnings, I suppose it was slightly over half a mile or some such matter. My thoughts had gone much farther, that morning.

One more turn, and the battlefield was visible ahead of me, the trampled earth, the sprawl of dead horses—had it been their

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quarrel?—and the other fallen shapes, fewer than I had thought. I watched the sudden heavy flight of a black crow started at my coming.

No one was there to challenge me—only the crow, and he had flown away. I passed a man lying in the ditch, whose face was upturned and no-way angry. His uniform was dark green, drenched in the front—likely the work of one of our broad-bladed Moha javelins. His hand still held a bow, and I noticed it was quite like mine, rather short and heavy in the body. It would be hard to bend but easy to carry in thick woods. His fingers were clenched on it, though it had done him no good; anyway I had no wish to take it from him—my own suited me. I might have taken two or three of the good steel-tipped arrows I saw in his quiver, but something stopped me from it. Maybe some tavern-tale heard in childhood about the anger of ghosts, but I don't think it was that: I think it was the mildness of his face after he had forgotten about war, and killing, and life. I went on up the road.

It might be difficult, I thought, to find that man whose arm had, in a way, beckoned me, for as I climbed toward the higher ground all the dead were somehow delaying me, holding me back, as though each one made some demand on me or suffered some need—like, say, a need to talk. Yet surely they did not, and if they had, what could I have done?

It was not difficult after all. He lay as I had last seen him, the arm over his eyes. The sunlit sparkle on his hand had been a little ring, ruby-colored—cheap glass, I guess; who would steal it? No insignia of rank, a private in the army with an arrow lodged low in the belly that would not have killed quickly, and a sword-gash in the neck. The sword-wound had missed the artery, but spilled a great deal, perhaps slowly, though it was doing so no longer. He was still warm. I think he may have imitated death while our brave men were going by, and then truly died as I was on my way to him.

Fear stirred in me again. The routed Katskil survivors would not be far from here, and might return. Some detachment of our own might come back, for the Moha dead—surely they would, rather than leave them for the wilderness scavengers. I climbed the rise hurriedly and started down the far side, meaning to get back in the forest cover.

Something gray was standing in a half-crouch at the edge of the road only a few dozen steps away. I halted from sheer startled curiosity. I had been walking, without any effort or thought for it, as quietly as I would have gone in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the woods, and the gray wolf, his nose already full of the smell of human flesh and blood, had not heard me. He was turned partly away from me, intent on something off in the bushes. I searched, and found what he was watching.

A tiny stream flowed out of the woods on my right and through low growth into a ditch along the road. A man, a Katskil soldier, was crawling toward it with his bronze helmet slung over his arm. He was a boy, not much older than I, maybe seventeen, dark and thin, with gray eyes. He must have been hidden in a thicket where they overlooked him. Now that all was quiet he had come out, driven by his thirst, and was trying to make it by pulling himself along on his arms, with a bit of help from one leg. The other leg was gashed from hip to knee and still slowly bleeding, and a broken-off arrow shaft protruded from his side.

He must have had every nerve focused on the water he desired, for he did not see me, but I saw him become aware of the gray wolf who watched him, undecided, with the timid cruelty and curiosity of his breed. A black would have taken the boy in a moment. The soldier braced up slightly on his arm, letting his helmet slip down to his hand, which gripped it—his only weapon. I suppose his others were somewhere in the woods. His face was set, patient, shining with a film of sweat.

The small noise of readying my arrow made the wolf whirl and face me. Seeing no better target, I gave him the arrow in the flat gray front of his chest. He leaped, scuttled a step or two into the road, and died. The boy lay as before, watching me now, without anger and without hope. I said: "I'll get the water."

He let me take the helmet, with some noise in his throat, maybe protest or assent, I don't know. He seemed more puzzled than anything else, damp brows knitting in a frown—a polite frown, not an angry one.

I filled the helmet at the stream and brought it to him. Lying in that awkward sprawl it was hard for him to drink; his hands could not help much. The arrow shaft in his side below the ribs made me afraid to lift him. I told him I was about to try it, and he nodded slightly, setting his jaw, but wincing and groaning too much at the first pressure of my arm under his shoulders. I had to give that up, and ease him back. I spooned out some water in my hand and got it to his mouth. He swallowed it, and lost it in a sharp cough that brought up a little blood. I think the arrow may have pierced his stomach. He cleared his mouth of blood and tried to say something. I believe it was "Thanks."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I took off the rag I had tied on my head to hide my hair, and attempted to bind up the long wound his his thigh. He let me do that, understanding it, watching me in the same abstracted way, but perhaps less puzzled and more indifferent. The rag wasn't long enough, and I couldn't fasten it properly. Presently he said quite clearly: "Let it be."

"Is it bad?"

"Numb mostly. Be you a Moha man, that 'ere reddy thatch?" They have an odd speech in Katskil. I'd heard it often from travelers at the inn before the war talk began to stir up quarrels and patriotism, and destroy friendships.

I said: "I haven't any country."

"Nay? What you mean? You wasn't with us, boy, I know ever' God-damn bum in the battalion."

"I'm alone. I was running away."

"Sure enough? Why, I wanted —" his voice faded, I remember, and strengthened again—"always wanted to do that."

"You did?"

"Ayah." He was looking at me in a different way; I'm not sure if friendliness is the word. I felt his need to talk. "Come to that, Pa wasn't for me going in the army. Said it was all no consequence. Could be right. You got that gray bastard real good. I never seen a bow handled neater."

"I've spent a lot of time in the woods."

"No country. You hadda be born somewheres, son. Moha—ayah?"

"Oh—Moha, uhha."

"What do they say about us there?"

"You mean the war talk?"

"Tell you something, boy. It's all crap. No consequence." He wanted to talk, but it was hard for him. "Pretty country around here," he said. "Laid up all night in the woods, our mudhead hard-luck outfit. Three companies, you had two battalions. Another comp'ny, likely we'd've had you. That's all crap too, boy. All night in the woods waiting for you, and a foggy son of a bitch too, had trouble keeping my gear dry."

"Waiting for *them*," I said. "I've got nothing to do with the army."

"Ayah. No country. Running away. Be glad you haven't, boy—it's all crap. I'll tell you what you got for a major in one of them battalions. 'No prisoners,' he says, 'just bring us the evidence.' I was off in that 'ere thicket, heard him give the order. 'Any old thing,' he says, sitting his hoss real handsome, you know, and you could've heard him laugh 'way back in Nuber. 'Any old thing, but a head's troublesome to carry, a hand'll do, just bring us the evidence.' "

"You wanted to run away?"

"Ayah. A kid's thought. Maybe you'll make it."

"Maybe you can run away with me. We could travel together, to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Levannon, that's where I'm going. Further too. Maybe—"

"Sure enough?" Why, he was thinking of it, with the arrow in his side, and taking pleasure from it I believe, seeing the idea for that moment as I saw it myself, the horizons, the friendship, the new places.

"You don't need to be afraid of me," I said.

"Nay, of course not." He said that easily. And that remains with me most clearly out of that morning—the flash of what I call recognition because I have no other word. I don't know his name, but he was in some way my kind, and we both knew it well for that little time before his face smoothed out completely and I had to let him lie back on the earth.

A MAN NAMED THIN
and other stories
by DASHIELL HAMMETT
edited and with an introduction
by ELLERY QUEEN

This is the ninth and final collection of Hammett short stories to be published by Mercury Publications. Complete and unabridged. (The eight preceding books are now out of print.)

On sale February 20—at most newsstands—50¢
—or direct from

MERCURY PRESS, Inc., P.O. Box 271, Rockville Centre, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Arthur Hughey was a creature of habit, and when people of habit bring themselves to make significant changes in their lives, the unexpected sometimes takes over. . . .

THE 63rd ST. STATION

by Avram Davidson

ARTHUR HUGHEY WOULD RATHER have gotten on one of them new IRT trains, but it would have been silly to wait in the station for another just because the one which pulled in was of the old type. It was about time, he thought, that the Transit Authority gave the IRT rider some consideration: Everything lavished on the IND or the BMT, and the third system left forlorn.

But, sitting in the old coach, he knew that he really preferred it. He did not really like new things, changed things. And he knew that eventually he *would* wait in the stations—wait and pass up the new trains and get in one of the old coaches—as long as there *were* old coaches. This was sure to make him late, and he hated being late, hated any breaks in familiar schedules. I *am a creature of habit,* he thought, with some satisfaction.

Then it hit him. For a moment he'd forgotten. He wouldn't be riding the IRT much longer, anyway. He was going to make a mighty big change, he was going to break the whole pattern of his life. And he hadn't yet told his sister. He felt a little sick.

The train went roaring down slopes and tearing around curves. Automatically, Arthur reached for a newspaper which wasn't there. How many years had he read the *Sun* in the subway (a joke which never lost savor for him) on the way home? Now there was no more *Sun* and he was unable to accustom himself to the fact. I am a creature of habit.

That was why he always got in the fifth coach: the end coaches were unsafe. Suppose the train ran into another? Or another ran into it from the other end?

"You can set the clock by Arthur," his sister Fanny said. Often. Well, she'd have to set it by someone else. He looked around the car. The woman in the ugly hat was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

in her corner, chewing gum and reading the *News*. She never missed the demise of the *Sun*. Did someone set a clock by her? Because she'd been in the fifth coach, too, almost every night for a long time.

"Will your sister miss you much?" Anna had asked him. Anna. There was a nice, old-fashioned sound about that name. Not Anne: Anna. *Where thou, great Anna, whom three realms obey*—well. Would Fanny miss him? He had simply shrugged, and Anna said, "Oh, well, she'll get used to it. She can visit us and we'll visit her—real often . . . When am I going to meet her, Arthur?"

When indeed? When was the last time Fanny had visited anyone? Or anyone visited them? He didn't recall the last visitor they'd had, but the last visit they had paid was to old Mrs. Whittier in the Methodist Home in Riverdale, shortly before she died. Since then they had spent every evening at home, reading, listening to the radio—Fanny hadn't wanted a TV—"Where would we put it, Arthur?" "We could put the sideboard in storage (he hadn't dared suggest selling it or giving it away)." *"Arthur! Mother's sideboard?"*—listening to the radio, reading, he working on his stamp collection, she doing her needlework, or knitting, for the church. They no longer attended on Sunday, but Fanny still sent in her work. Quiet evenings.

"Why forty-five isn't old! And Anna really thought so. She owned her home in Queens. That was where they'd live. And what would Fanny do? Fanny would die. She had put so much of life away from her, it would be no effort to let go of what remained. Well, he'd think of that later. Thinking of it now made him feel sick. Ninety-Sixth Street Station. Then Seventy-Second Street. Then Sixty-Third Street. He smiled.

That was one of those little private jokes he shared with Anna No, forty-five wasn't old. And Anna wasn't yet forty. They might have children, no reason why they shouldn't have children . . . A private little joke about the Sixty-Third Street Station. He wasn't sure she would believe him when he told her.

They had lunch at the Automat. The lunch which Fanny packed for him he gave to the elevator man. He couldn't throw it away. "Did you know there's an IRT station which isn't on the maps in the subways?" he asked.

"How do you *know?*" And she smiled and opened her eyes wide and was delighted.

"I *see* it. Sixty-Third Street. It must be a local stop. I take the express so we never stop there, just kind of slow up a little because it's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

at the top of a slope. But it isn't on the subway map."

So she would stop by his desk in the office where they worked and smile and ask, "What's new at Sixty-Third Street?" Or he would say, "I had a date with Mabel last night." That was the name he'd given to the woman in the ugly hat. He'd say, "We went with Legs and Shoulders to the penny arcade"—something like that. Anna and he got a lot of fun out of it.

The woman's name *had* to be Mabel. That was the kind of woman she was. And the two men he usually saw waiting on the platform at Sixty-Third Street—well, he just *knew* that they were called Legs and Shoulders: that padded-out jacket, those long, long limbs—they couldn't be called anything else.

The train came to Seventy-Second Street and again Arthur felt sick. What he was doing was right. A man should marry. It wasn't his fault that Fanny had built no life for herself. He shouldn't be expected to give his up—But he knew the arguments too well. He and Fanny had lived alone for twenty-five years. Since Mother died. Fanny would not believe him. He knew her. And when, finally she *did* believe him, what then? He felt cold and ill. And he knew that it was impossible. He couldn't do it. He gazed with anguish at the bleak subway station. There was a sign there among the advertisements, one of those Bible Society posters. *Now, therefore choose life, that ye may live.*

But he couldn't. He simply couldn't do it.

He must get off at the next stop and call Anna and tell her. There was nothing else. The train pulled out of Seventy-Second Street. Now that he had made up his mind, Arthur no longer felt ill. Just a little numb. He would get off at the next stop, call Anna. Not put it off for a minute.

The train went baying up the slope, slowed down at Sixty-Third Street, stopped. Arthur jumped to his feet. It had never stopped here before. The doors opened. Get out and call Anna. He stood, irresolute. The woman in the ugly hat looked up and caught his eye.

"Hurry," she said. "They'll only be here a minute. Hur-ry!"

"I can't give her up," Arthur found himself explaining, pleading.

"*Hur-ry!* It was no use. He had to give her up.

He started out. Legs and Shoulders grinned at him, grinned broadly.

"Look who's here!" said Legs.

"Well, at last!" said Shoulders.

The train started with a click and a clatter. The woman in the ugly hat began a scream that went on and on and on. The train ground to a halt. She stopped

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

screaming. She put a stick of gum in her mouth, turned a page in her newspaper, and began to read.

"If they'd put a steering wheel or something on this thing," Legs said, "one man could do it alone."

"You always got a beef. Easy on the curve," said Shoulders. The lights were very bright.

"Well, I thought for a while here we weren't going to make our quota," Legs remarked. "Fifty-one, fifty-two."

"We *always* make our quota. Don't the Boss see to it? Sometimes," Shoulders pointed out, "it just takes a little longer; that's all. Fifty-eight—Hey. The beer still cold in fifty-nine?"

Legs sounded a bit hurt. "Fifty-nine is always reserved for beer," he said. "No matter *what* happens: no warm beer. Sixty-one—"

"Sixty-two. Sixty Three. *Here* we are," said Shoulders, cheerfully. He pulled the long, deep drawer all the way out. "Every modern convenience," he said. "Got your end?"

"Got it," Legs said. "*Up* we go. Easy. Easy. That's right."

The units were well-designed; the stretcher was a perfect fit.

"Well . . . I guess . . ." Shoulders grunted a bit. "I guess we buy Mabel a new hat."

"Guess so," Legs answered. "Good old Mabel."

They gave the drawer a push and it rolled back in with a click and a clatter.

Communication

These creatures find it extremely difficult
To communicate, being limited
To five chief feelers and a decad
Or two of minor tendrils, but this fault
Is somewhat compensated for by a cult
Among them called poets who, upon a thread
Of words, string accretions of irritated
Awareness which communicate like salt

In a common wound. I found this practice quaint
And piquant to an extreme and adopting
It for my private use was the next logical
Step in my accumulative survey. Want
May yet teach these deaf-mutes how to sing.
In the meantime, I note their ancient fall.

—Walter H. Kerr

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SCIENCE

As the Good Doctor points out here, most of us tend to think we know what life is—but encounter difficulty when we try to define it. Ever a man to face up to a difficulty, Dr. Asimov rushes in . . .

THAT'S LIFE!

by Isaac Asimov

My son (currently aged 10) is fiendishly interested in outer space. This is entirely without reference to his father's occupation, concerning which he is possessed of complete apathy. Anyway, in honor of this interest of his, he was bought a recording of a humorous skit entitled "The Astronaut" (which has now worn so thin as the result of repeated playings, that the needle delivers both sides simultaneously).

At one point, the interviewer asks the astronaut, in this recording, whether he expects to find life on Mars, and the astronaut answers thoughtfully: "Maybe—if I land on Saturday night."

Which brings us face to face with the question of what, exactly, do we mean by life. And we don't have to go to Mars to be faced with a dilemma. There is room for heated arguments right here on Earth.

We all know, or think we know, purely on the basis of intuition, what life is. We know that we are alive and that a dead man isn't; that an oyster is alive and a rock isn't. We are also quite confident that such diverse things as sea anemones, gorillas, chestnut trees, sponges, moss, tapeworms and chipmunks are all alive—except when they're dead.

The difficulty arises when we try to take this intuitive knowledge

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and fit it into words, and this is what I am going to try to do in this article. Once again, as the well-known saying goes, Asimov rushes in where angels fear to tread. (The Kindly Editor tells me this is not an accurate version of the well-known saying but that it will do. He often speakes in riddles.) There is more than one fashion in which we can construct a definition. For instance, we can make a definition functional, or we can make it structural.

Thus, a child might say: "A house is something to live in." (Functional). Or he might say: "A house is made of brick." (Structural.)

Neither definition is satisfactory since a tent is something to live in and yet is not ordinarily considered a house, while a wall may be made of brick and yet not be a house.

Combining the two types of definitions may leave it imperfect even so, but it will represent an improvement. Thus "A house is something made of brick in which people live" at once eliminates tents and walls. (It also eliminates frame houses, to say nothing of brick houses that are owned by families on a month's vacation in the mountains.)

This line of reasoning has an application to definitions involving the concept of life. For instance, when I went to school, the definition I saw most often was functional and went something like this: "A living organism is characterized by the ability to sense its environment and respond appropriately, to ingest food, digest it, absorb it, assimilate it, break its substance down and utilize the energy so derived, excrete wastes, grow and reproduce." (When I refer to this later in the article, I shall signify the list by "sense its environment etc. etc. etc." to save wear-and-tear on my typewriter ribbon and your retinas.)

There was always a question, though, as to whether this was really an exclusive definition. Inanimate objects could imitate these functions if we wanted to argue subtly enough. Crystals grow, for instance, and if we consider the saturated solution to be its food, we might make out a case for absorption and assimilation. Fires can be said to digest their fuel and to leave wastes behind and they certainly grow and reproduce. Then, too, very simple robots have already been constructed that can imitate all these functions of life (except growth and reproduction) by means of a photocell and wheels.

I tried to define life functionally in another fashion in a book I wrote recently*. I introduced thermodynamic concepts and said: "A living or-

* *This book should be published just about the time this article appears and for the sake of my publishers (Doubleday in this case), I mention the title, which is* LIFE AND ENERGY.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ganism is characterized by the ability to effect a temporary and local decrease in entropy."

As it stands, however, this definition is perfectly terrible, for the sun's heat can also bring about a temporary and local decrease in entropy, every time it evaporates a puddle of water. However, as I shall explain later in the article, I didn't let this statement stand unmodified. (Incidentally, if you want to know about entropy, I refer you to my article "Order! Order!"—F&SF, February, 1961.)

What we need, clearly, is to introduce something structural into the definition, but can we? All forms of life, however diverse in appearance, have functions in common. They all sense their environment etc. etc. etc., which is why a functional definition can be set up so easily. But do they have any structure in common? The mere fact that I can use the clause "however diverse in appearance" would indicate they do not.

That, however, is only true if we were to rely on the diversity of ordinary appearance as visible to (if you will excuse the expression) naked eye. . . . But suppose we clothe the eye in an appropriate lens?

Back in 1665, an English scientist, Robert Hooke, published a book in which he described his researches with a microscope. (He was one of the first two men to go about microscopy systematically, the other being his Dutch contemporary, Anton van Leeuwenhoek.) As part of his research, he studied a thin section of cork and found it to be riddled with tiny rectangular holes. He named the holes "cells," this meaning any small room and therefore being a graphically appropriate word.

But cork is dead tissue even when it occurs on a living tree. Over the next century and a half, microscopists studied living tissue, or, at least, tissue that was alive until they prepared it for study. They found that such tissue was also marked off into tiny compartments and the name "cell" was kept for those even though, in living tissue, they were no longer empty holes but were, to all appearance, filled with matter.

It wasn't until the 1830's, though, that accumulating evidence made it possible for two German biologists, Matthias Jakob Schleiden and Theodor Schwann, to present the world with the generalization that all living organisms were made up of cells. Here, then, is a structural definition: "A living organism is made up of cells."

However, such a definition although it sounds good cannot be reversed. You cannot say that an object composed of cells is living since a dead man is made up of cells just as surely as a living man is, except that the cells of a dead man are dead.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And it does no good to amend the definition by saying that a living organism is composed of living cells, because that is arguing in a circle. Besides, in an organism that is freshly dead, many cells are still alive. Perhaps even the vast majority are—yet the organism is dead.

We can do better, as in the case of the definition of the house, if we include both structural and functional aspects in the definition and say: "A living organism is made up of cells *and* is characterized by the ability to sense its environment etc. etc. etc."

Here is a definition that includes all the diverse types of organisms we intuitively recognize as living and excludes anything else, such as crystals, river deltas, flames, robots, and abstractions which can be said to mimic the functions we associate with life—simply because these latter objects do not consist of cells. The definition also excludes dead remnants of once-living objects (however freshly dead) because such dead objects, while constructed of cells, do not perform the functions we associate with life.

I referred in passing, some paragraphs ago, to "living cells." What does that mean?

The definition of a living organism as I have just presented it says that it is made up of cells, but does that imply that the cells themselves are alive? Can we argue that all parts of a living body are necessarily alive and that cells therefore must be alive, as long as they are part of a living organism?

This is clearly a mistaken argument. Hair is not alive, though it is growing on your body. Your skin is covered with a layer of cells that are quite dead by any reasonable criterion, though they are part of a living organism.

If we are going to decide whether cells are alive, we can't allow it to depend secondarily on a definition of a living organism. We must apply the necessary criteria of life to the cell itself and ask whether it can sense its environment etc. etc. etc. and meet the functional definition, at least, of a living thing.

At once the answer is, No. Many cells clearly lack one or more of the vital functional abilities of living things. The cells of our nervous system, for instance, cannot reproduce. We are born with the total number of nerve cells we will ever have; any change thereafter can be only for the worse, for a nerve cell that loses its function cannot be replaced.

To be more general, none of our cells, if detached from its neighbors and set up in business for itself, can long survive to fulfill its functions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

And yet there are different cells among those of our body that can, in themselves, perform each of the functions associated with life. Some cells can sense their environment, others respond appropriately, some supervise digestion, others absorb, all cells assimilate and produce and use energy, some cells grow and reproduce continually throughout life even after the organism as a whole has ceased to grow and reproduce. In short, the functions of a living organism are, in a sense, the sum of the functions of the cells making it up.

We can say then: "A living cell is one that contributes in some active fashion to the functioning of the organism of which it is part." This raises the question of what we mean by "some active fashion," but I will leave that to your intuition and say only that the definition is intended to eliminate the problem of the dead cells of the skin that serve our body only by being there as protection, and not by doing anything actively. Furthermore, a cell may continue its accustomed activities for a limited time after the death of the organisms and then we can speak of living cells in a dead body.

But there is still an important point to make. We now have two different definitions, one for a living cell and one for a living organism. That means that a cell of the human being is not alive in the same sense that a human being itself is alive. And this makes sense at that, for though the functions of a human being may be viewed as the sum of the functions of his cells, the life of a human being is still more than the sum of the life of his cells.

If you can imagine all the cells of the human body alive in isolation and put together at random, you know that no human being will result. A human being consists not only of something material (cells), but of something rather abstract as well (a specific cell organization). It is quite possible to end human life by destroying the organization while scarcely touching any of the cells themselves.

But I am talking about human cells—is this true for the cells of other organisms as well? Yes, it is; at least, for any reasonably complex organism.

However, as one descends to simpler and simpler organisms, the factor of cellular organization becomes progressively less important. That is, disruption of organization can become more and more extensive without actually putting an end to life. We can replace a lost fingernail, but a lobster can replace a lost limb. A starfish can be cut into sizable chunks and each piece will grow back the remainder, while a sponge can be divided into separate cells which will then reclump and reor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ganize. At no point, however, is organization of zero importance, as long as an organism consists of more than one cell.

But organisms made up of a single cell do indeed exist, having first been discovered by van Leeuwenhoek at the same time that Hooke was discovering cells. A one-celled organism, such as an ameba, fulfills all the functional requirements of a living organism, in that it can sense its environment etc. etc. etc. And yet it does not meet the structural portion of the definition, for it is not composed of cells. It *is* a cell.

So we can modify the definition: "A living organism is made up of one or more cells and is characterized by the ability to sense its environment etc. etc. etc."

It follows then that cell organization is not an absolute requirement for *all* types of living organisms. Only the existence of the cell itself seems to be required for the existence of a living thing.

For this reason, it grew popular in the 19th century to say that the cell was the "unit of life," and for biologists to devote more and more of their effort toward an understanding of the cell.

But now we can raise the question as to whether the cell actually is the irreducible unit of life or whether something still simpler exists that will serve in that respect.

First, what is a cell? Roughly speaking, we can speak of it as an object that contains at least three parts. First, it possesses a thin membrane that marks it off from the outside universe. Second, it possesses a small internal structure called a nucleus. Third, between membrane and nucleus lies the cytoplasm.

To be sure, there are human cells (such as those of the heart) that run together and are not properly separated by membranes. There are also human cells, such as the red blood corpuscles, that have no nuclei. These are, however, highly specialized cells of a multicellular organism which, in isolation, we cannot consider living organisms.

For those cells that are truly living organisms, it remains true that the membrane, cytoplasm and nucleus are minimum essentials. Some particularly simple one-celled organisms appear to lack nuclei, the bacteria and the blue-green algae being examples. These cells, however, contain "nuclear material"—that is, regions which react chemically as do the intact nuclei of more complicated cells. These simple cells still have nuclei then, but nuclei that are spread through the body of the cell rather than collected in one spot.

Is any one of these parts of the cell more essential than the other two? That may seem like asking which leg of a three-legged stool is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

more essential, since no cell can live without all three. Nevertheless there is evidence pointing to a gradation of importance. If an ameba, for instance, is divided by means of a fine needle into two halves one of which contains the intact nucleus, the half with the nucleus can recover, survive, grow and reproduce normally. The half without the nucleus may carry on the functions of life for a short while, but cannot grow or reproduce.

Furthermore when a cell divides, it goes through a complicated series of changes that particularly involve small structures called chromosomes that lie within the nucleus. This is true whether a cell is an organism in itself or is merely part of a larger organism.

The changes in which the chromosomes are involved includes a key step, one in which each chromosome induces the formation of another like itself. This is called "replication" for the chromosome has produced a replica of itself. No cell ever divides without such replication taking place. The suspicion began to stir in biologists, as the 19th century drew to an end, that as the cell was the key to the organism, so the chromosome was the key to the cell.

We can help matters along if we turn once again to the structural definition. After all our definition of a living organism is both functional and structural as far as multicellular organisms are concerned. They are composed of cells. For a one-celled organism, the definition becomes purely functional, for there is nothing to say what a single cell is composed of.

To clarify that point, we can descend to the molecular level. A cell contains numerous types of molecules, some of which are also to be found in inanimate nature and which are therefore, however characteristic of living organisms, not characteristic *only* of living organisms. (Water is an example.)

Yet there are molecules that are to be found only in living cells or in material that was once part of a living cell or, at the very least, had been formed by a living cell. The most characteristic of these (for reasons I won't go into here) are the various protein molecules. No form of life exists, no single cell, however simple or however complicated, that does not contain protein.

Proteins satisfy a variety of functions. Some merely make up part of the substratum of the body, forming major components of skin, hair, cartilage, tendons, ligaments and so on. Other proteins, however, are intimately concerned with the actual chemical workings of the cell; and catalyze the thousands of reactions that go on. These proteins (called

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"enzymes") are, we cannot help but intuitively feel, close to the chemical essence of life.

In fact, I can now return to my book LIFE AND ENERGY, from which I quoted an unsatisfactory definition of the living organism near the beginning of the article, and can explain how I amended the definition to make it satisfactory, thus: "A living organism is characterized by the ability to effect a temporary and local decrease in entropy by means of enzyme-catalyzed reactions." Here is a definition that is both functional (it effects an entropy decrease) and structural (by means of enzymes).

Now this definition *does not involve cells.* It applies as truly to a multicellular as to a unicellular organism, and it accurately marks off those systems we intuitively recognize as alive from those we do not.

This new definition would make it seem that it was not the cell so much that was the unit of life, but the enzymes within the cell. However, if enzymes can be formed only within cells and by cells, the distinction is a purely academic one. . . . Unless, that is, we can pin down the manufacture of enzymes more specifically than to the cell.

In recent decades, it has become quite obvious that the thousands of different enzymes present in each cell (one for each of the thousands of different chemical reactions that are continually proceeding within the cell) are formed under the supervision of the chromosomes.

Shifting to the chromosomes then, and remaining on the molecular level, I must explain that the chromosomes are composed of a series of giant protein molecules of a variety called nucleoprotein, because each consists of a protein portion and a nucleic acid portion. The nucleic acid portion is quite different from the protein in structure.

Nucleic acid is so named because it was found, originally, in the nucleus. Since the first days, it has also been found in the cytoplasm, but it keeps its original name. There are two forms of nucleic acid, with complicated names that are abbreviated DNA and RNA. DNA is found only in the nucleus and makes up a major portion of the chromosomes. RNA is found chiefly in the cytoplasm, though a small quantity is also present in the nucleus.

Research in the 1950's has shown that it is not merely the chromosomes but the DNA content thereof (with an assist from RNA) that supervises the synthesis of specific enzymes. Through those enzymes, the nucleic acids of the cell might be said to supervise the chemical activity of the cell and to be, therefore, in control of all the functions we associate with living organisms.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But though nucleic acids control the functions of living organisms, can they themselves be considered "living"? When this question arose earlier in the article in connection with cells, I wasn't satisfied that a cell was truly alive until it could be shown that a single cell could serve as an organism in itself. Similarly, we can't consider nucleic acids to be alive until and unless we can show that a nucleic acid molecule can serve as an organism in itself.

Let's go back in time again.

Back in the 1880's, when the French biochemist, Louis Pasteur, was studying hydrophobia, he tried to isolate the germ of the disease. Twenty years earlier, he had evolved the "germ theory of disease" you see, which stated that all infectious diseases were caused and transmitted by microorganisms. Hydrophobia was certainly infectious, but where was the microorganism?

Pasteur had two choices. He could abandon his theory or he could introduce an *ad hoc* amendment (that is, one designed for no other purpose than to explain away a specific difficulty). Ordinarily the introduction of *ad hoc* amendments is a poor procedure, but a genius can get away with it. Pasteur suggested that the germ of hydrophobia existed, but was too small to be seen in a microscope.

Pasteur was right.

Another disease studied at the time, by botanists, was tobacco mosaic disease, one in which the leaves of tobacco plants were mottled into a mosaic. The juice from a diseased leaf would infect a healthy leaf, so by Pasteur's theory, a germ should exist. None, however, could be found here, either.

In 1892, a Russian bacteriologist, Dmitri Ivanovski, ran some of the juice of a diseased leaf through a porcelain filter that was so fine no bacterium, not even the smallest, could pass through. The juice that did get through was still capable of passing on the disease. The infectious agent was therefore called a "filtrable virus." ("Virus" simply means "poison" so a "filtrable virus" is a poison that passes through a filter.)

Other diseases, including hydrophobia, were found to be transmitted by filtrable viruses. The nature of these viruses, however, was unknown until 1931, when an English bacteriologist, William J. Elford, designed a filter fine enough to trap the virus. In this way, the virus, though smaller by far than even the smallest cells, proved to be larger by far than most molecules.

Well, then, was the virus particle (whatever its nature) a living organism? It infects cells so it must somehow sense their presence and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

respond appropriately. It must feed on their substance, absorb, assimilate, make use of energy, grow and reproduce. And yet the virus particle certainly did not consist of cells as they were then known. In the 1930's the whole problem of the nature of life was thrown into the confusion out of which the cell theory had lifted it in the 1830's.

In 1935, the American biochemist, Wendell Meredith Stanley, actually succeeded in crystallizing the tobacco mosaic virus, and this seemed to be a forceful argument against life. Even after the virus had been crystallized it remained ineffective and how can anything living survive crystallization, for goodness sake? Crystals were objects associated only with non-living things.

Actually, this argument is worthless. Nothing alive can be crystallized because, until viruses were discovered, nothing alive was simple enough to be crystallized. But viruses were simpler than any cellular form of life and there was no reason in the world to suppose that the non-crystallization rule ought to apply to them.

Once enough tobacco mosaic virus was purified and brought together by crystallization, it could be tested chemically, and it was found by two British biochemists, Frederick C. Bawden and Norman W. Pirie, to be a nucleoprotein. It was 94 percent protein and 6 percent RNA.

Since then all viruses that have been analyzed, without exception, have proved to be nucleoprotein. Some contain DNA, some RNA, some both—but none are completely lacking in nucleic acid.

Furthermore, when a virus infects a cell, it is the nucleic acid portion that actually enters the cell, while the protein portion remains outside. There is now every reason to think that the protein is merely a non-living shell about the nucleic acid which is itself the key portion of the virus. Naked nucleic acid molecules have even been prepared from viruses and, in themselves, have remained slightly infective.

It certainly looks as though in the virus, we have found our example of a nucleic acid molecule that in itself and by itself behaves as a living organism.

Suppose we say, then: "A living organism is characterized by the possession of at least one molecule of nucleic acid capable of replication." This definition is both structural (the nucleic acid) and functional (the replication). It includes not only all cellular life, but all viruses as well; and it excludes all things else.

To be sure, there are arguments against this. Some feel that the virus is not a true example of a living organism because it cannot perform

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

its function until it is inside the cell. Within the cell, and only within the cell does it supervise enzyme action and bring about the synthesis of specific enzymes and other proteins. It does this by making use of the cell's chemical machinery, including its enzymes. Outside the cell, the virus performs none of the functions we associate with life. The cell, therefore, so this argument goes, is still the unit of life.

I do not see the force of this argument. To be sure, the virus requires a cell in order to perform certain of its functions, but its life outside the cell is not wholly static. It must actively penetrate the cell, and must do that without the help of the cell itself. This is an example of at least one action characteristic of life (the equivalent of ingestion of food, somewhat inside-out) that it performs all by itself.

Then, even if we admit that the virus makes use of cellular machinery for some of its functions, so does a tapeworm make use of our cellular machinery for some of its functions. The virus, like the tapeworm, is a parasite, but happens to be a more complete one. Shall we draw an artificial line and say that the tapeworm is a living organism and the virus is not?

Furthermore, all organisms, parasites or not, are as dependent upon some factor of the outer world as viruses are. We ourselves, for instance, could not live for more than a few minutes if our access to oxygen were cut off. Is that any reason to suppose that we are not living organisms but that it is the oxygen that is really the living organism. Why therefore put the necessary outside cell (for the virus) in a category different from that of the necessary outside oxygen (for us)?

Nor is there anything crucial in the fact that the virus makes use of enzymes that are not its own. Let me explain this point by analogy.

Consider the woodcutter chopping down a tree with an axe. He can't do it without an axe, and yet we never think of a woodcutter as a man-axe combination. A woodcutter is a man and the axe is merely the woodcutter's tool. Similarly, a nucleic acid may not be able to perform its actions without enzymes, but the enzymes are merely its tool, while the nucleic acid is the thing itself.

Furthermore, when a woodcutter is in action, chopping down a tree, the axe may be his or it may be stolen. This may make him an honest man or a thief, respectively, but in either case, he is a woodcutter in action. In the same way, a virus performing its functions is a living organism whether the enzymes it uses are its own or not.

As far as I am concerned, therefore, my definition of living organisms in terms of their nucleic acid content is a valid one.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It's necessary to remember, of course, that a living organism is more than its nucleic acid content just as it is more than its cellular content. As I said earlier in the article, a living organism consists not only of separate parts, but also of those parts in appropriate organization.

There are some biologists who deplore the intense concentration on DNA in contemporary biological and biochemical research. They feel that organization is being neglected in favor of a study of the parts alone, and I must admit there is some justification to this.

Nevertheless, I also feel we will never understand the organization until we have a thorough understanding of the parts being organized, and it is my hope that when the DNA molecule is laid out plain for all to see, that many of the current mysteries of life will fall neatly into place—organization and all.

The Stone Woman

She could have been Griselda's sister. Her love
was one long story of patience
until one day,
choosing a flinty trail among the hills,
she slowly walked away
from him who all his life
assumed that meekness
to be unaltering
like nature's laws

Mountain hardness became her defense
She petrified, vein and corpuscle, among the rock veins.
Her brain turned mineral.

On some revengeful night forgotten by the moon
her lover will hear the hill slope
tearing apart.
She will grope her way toward his bed then,
shaping memories of words
with porphyry lips
until he feels above his heartbeat
the terrible grey satin
of agate fingers.

—Doris Pitkin Buck

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

BOOKS

Fans, or "The Fen," have long been the glory and the exasperation of science fiction. There has never been such a dedicated body in the history of literature. Fans publish "fanzines," correspond with each other, slang each other in their publications, hound editors, attend conventions with violence, and in goodly numbers hope someday to become science fiction authors themselves.

Fully aware of the risks we're running, this department decided to interview a fan. We have discussed authors, editors, and publishers in the past. We felt it was time to get around to the readers of science fiction. Our subject may or may not be typical; we don't know, that will be up to you to decide.

John X is forty-five years old. He was born and raised in New York City, went to New York public schools, and studied for a year in the Dramatic Arts Department of New York University at Washington Square. In the late thirties, during the depths of the Depression, he was a jobless young actor, wandering around Broadway, and spending long afternoons in Walgreen's drugstore on 45th Street, discussing, with equal passion, the theater and science fiction with friends.

He also played chess miserably; was fascinated with the new-fangled candid camera photography; was intrigued by astronomy but couldn't afford a telescope; dug music and sound-effects in any form, and was attempting to collect records; and couldn't make up his mind whether he preferred the company of boys or girls.

His taste in science fiction was similarly catholic, but with a definite bias for the mysterious and the unknown. He liked stories about the exploration of deep space and the mysteries that might be revealed in the Horsehead Nebula, stories about other dimensions, stories about parallel worlds, stories about unknowns of alien origin and purpose living among us and controlling us without our knowledge. He had a magnificent sense of wonder. "It could really actually be happening," he would say in awe.

World War II came along and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

uprooted his life. He went into the army, had a rough basic training, and then was transferred to the army film studios in Long Island where training films were being made. He became friendly with many eminent authors and directors there, and says that William Saroyan was fascinated with science fiction but could never make head or tail of it. John spent the war on Long Island, working in the film labs. He was still reading science fiction, for these were the halcyon days of the field.

"When the news came that they dropped the A-bomb on Hiroshima," he says, "everybody was flabbergasted. Not me. My reaction was: Why all the surprise? We've had nuclear fission in science fiction for the past ten years."

John came out of the army, went to Hollywood to look for work as a director, actor, cutter, anything; decided that he preferred girls after all, and got married. He promoted himself a job as stage-manager-valet-dresser-secretary to a movie star who also liked science fiction, progressive jazz, photography, chess, and girls.

"We used to argue about science fiction a lot," John says. "Things like: could robots be built, and what would be their perfect form; were computors really capable of thought; what was the thought-process; the origin of the solar system; relativity; the expanding universe . . ."

"What kind of stories did you like then?"

"Idea stories."

"Such as?"

"Oh, stories based on a mathematical formula for social behaviour, or non-Euclidian geometry . . . I always wanted to write a story based on the proof that $2 = 1$."

"Did you ever write it?"

"I forgot the proof."

"I can get it for you."

"No. I've got another idea. You know Euclid's fifth postulate about parallel lines that never meet? Well, Lobachevsky said it couldn't be proved. I want to write a story about parallel people that never meet."

"Where'd you get that idea from?"

"A great book that just came out. 'Mathematics and the Imagination,' by Kasner."

We got the book and checked. John had completely misinterpreted the passage. Euclid's fifth postulate states: "Through any point in the plane, there is one, and only one, line parallel to a given line." Lobachevsky suggested that all the other postulates of Euclid were to be retained, only, in place of the fifth, a substitution was to be made: "Through any point in the plane, there are *two* lines parallel to any given line."

John often asked us why we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

weren't writing science fiction any more. When we replied that at that time we more or less felt that it was writing for kids, he disagreed: "Sure, it used to be kid stuff when we were kids," he said. "But you forget that the kids have grown up now. Science fiction fans are mature adults."

He would involve us in long discussions of stories. Always, it seemed, he ignored the fictional aspects and preferred to explore the scientific concepts behind the fiction. This rather surprised us because John had by now become a stage-manager, acting coach, and off-Broadway producer. We would have thought that he would be more interested in the dramatic qualities of science fiction rather than the ideational. He was not.

And yet he was one of the first to attempt to put together a science fiction musical; and this was long before Broadway did its most recent science fiction plays: "Night of the Auk," with Claude Rains and Christopher Plummer, and "Visit to a Small Planet," with Cyril Ritchard. When we asked John why he was so set on doing science fiction as a musical comedy, he said: "For the color, the costumes, the wild music and sound effects . . ."

"But not for the ideas?"

He shook his head. "You have to remember that the average theater-goer is twenty years behind the science fiction fans. Ideas that would be dismissed by the fans as old hat would be brand new and startling to the average theater or TV public."

"Then you believe the fans are special?"

"Sure we're special. We're the new *avant garde.*"

"Of what?"

"Of new ideas. The Greenwich Village bohemians with their studios and paintings and talk about life and art . . . they're old-fashioned. We're the new movement. We're breaking the new trails."

"Frankly, John, many of my friends who've gone to science fiction conventions tell me that the fans are irrational, childish, and extremely irritating."

"Of course they are," he said. "But you have to remember that they're non-conformist. A man or a woman has to be a little bit crazy to be non-conformist. You haven't lived outside New York much, have you?"

"No."

"Can you imagine what courage it takes to admit you prefer science fiction when the rest of your town is talking football and country club and bestsellers and the Friday night Quilting Bee?"

"That's true."

"If a fan is crazy and brave enough to break the rules of conformism, you have to expect him to break the rules of social behavior, too."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"But isn't science fiction socially acceptable today?"

"No, not yet. It won't be until science catches up with the fiction."

We ran into him on Madison Avenue the other day. The Russians had put their men into space, and the Americans were busting a gut to catch up. Brendon Behan's play, "The Hostage" was featuring a song: "Mr. Khrushchev, don't muck around with the moon." "Twilight Zone" had been appearing on television for years. John was triumphant.

"What did I tell you?" he said. "It's happened just the way I said it would. Science fiction is in, and that's why it's dying."

"How do you figure that?"

"We're not rebels any more. They've stopped laughing at us. The minute we walk into a party, they stop talking about football and country club and Quilting Bees. They sit at our feet, humbly, and ask questions. That's our headache today. We've got to become non-conformists again. I'm telling you, if science fiction doesn't come up with something new and daring and unacceptable, we're going to look around for something else."

"You don't really mean that, do you?"

"No, I guess not. Science fiction is like malaria; once you've got it, it's forever."

"Tell me something, John. Honestly, now . . . are you a professional fan or a professional rebel?"

"A little of both, I guess. A little of both." Then he grinned. "But isn't that what makes us great?"

—Alfred Bester

Mercury Press, Inc., 580 Fifth Avenue, New York 36, N. Y. F3

Send me The Magazine Of FANTASY AND SCIENCE FICTION for one year for $4.50.

☐ I enclose $4.50 ☐ Bill me

Name .....

Address .....

City .....Zone.....State.....

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Ever since Zenna Henderson's first tale of the People appeared here some ten years ago, readers have been asking for more. By last year, there were enough of these stories to make a book—PILGRIMAGE: THE BOOK OF THE PEOPLE *(Doubleday). Does, we wonder, this new novelet of the People represent the first step toward a new book?*

SHADOW ON THE MOON

by Zenna Henderson

"NO, WE CAN'T EVEN CONSIDER it." Father smoothed his hand along the board he was planing. It was to be a small table for Mother's birthday. I curled one of the good smelling shavings around my finger as I listened.

"But, Father—" I could see Remy's hands clenching themselves as he tried to control his voice and keep it low and reasonable—a real job for the volatile person he was. "If you'd only—"

Father put the plane down and looked at Remy. I mean really looked at him, giving him his full attention. "Has anything changed materially since last we discussed the matter?" he asked.

"Apparently not." Remy laughed shortly. "I hoped *you* might have. . . . If you'd only consider it—"

"You know I'm not the only one that thinks this way," said Father. "Though I concur heartily with the thinking of the rest of the Old Ones. No good would be served. Can't you see that, Remy?"

"I can't see any flat statement like that!" cried Remy, his control of his impatience beginning to slip. "Every step of progress anyone makes is some good. Why don't you let us—"

"Look, Remy," Father sat on one hip on the edge of the work bench. "Shall we A B C it again. A—we couldn't possibly let anyone else know we had gone to the moon in a space craft. B—To the best of our knowledge, there is no immediate need for anything to be found on the moon. C—" he smiled. "'We bin there already.' At least on our way in. And that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

was enough for most of us. It looked as good to us as the Statue of Liberty did to the flood of immigrants that used to come over from Europe, but we're most of us content to stay where we are now—looking at it from this side, not that." He grinned at Remy. "Unless you have any information that would materially alter any of these three check points, I'm afraid the discussion is closed—"

"Why *couldn't* we tell?" cried Remy, desperately, feeling the whole situation going down the drain. "Why do we have to keep it a secret? Isn't everyone risking their lives and spending fortunes trying to get into space? Why can't we help?" He broke off because his throat got so tight with anger and frustrated tears that he couldn't talk any more.

Father sighed patiently. "So we go to the moon and back and announce it. So they all swarm around. Can't you hear them screaming? . . . What propellant? What engine? Escape velocity—air pressure—radiation—landing—return launching—re-entry! What would you tell them? Go on, boy-type, answer the nice people. Show them the engines. What? No engines! Show them the fuel tank. *¿Que?* no fuel tank! Show them our protection against radiation. *Quoi?* no protection?

"No, Remy. I wish, because you want it so much, that we could make this expedition for you. Your grandfather's memories of space can hardly be much comfort to you at your age. But it's out of the question. We cannot deliver ourselves over to the Outsiders for the whim of just one of us. If only you'd reconcile yourself to it—"

"What's the use then!" Remy flung at Father. "What's the use of being able to, if we don't?"

"Being able to is not always the standard to go by," said Father. He flicked his fingers at the ceiling and we three watched the snowflakes drift down starrily to cover the work bench. "Your mother loves to watch the snow," he said, "but she doesn't go around snowing all the time." He stopped the snow with a snap of his fingers and it dampened the wood shavings with its melting. "No, just being able to is not a valid reason. And reason there must be before action."

Remy kicked a block of wood out of the workshop and all the way up the slope to our walnut tree on the hill above the twisted, glittering string that was Cayuse Creek. I followed along. I always follow along—Remy's shadow, they call me—and he usually pays about that much attention to me. What can I expect else, being a girl and his sister besides. But I like it because Remy does things—lots of things—and he can usually use a listening ear. I am the willing ear. I'm Bethie-too, because Mother is Bethie.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Then we'll do it by ourselves!" he muttered as he dug a rock out of the ground where it was poking his shoulder when he tried to relax against the hillside. "We'll build our own craft and we'll go by ourselves!" He was so used to me that he automatically said 'we'—though it usually meant *he* had decided *he'd* do something—a sort of royal 'we.' He lay back under the tree, his hands under his head, his eyes rebelliously on the leaves above. I sat by him, trying to snow like Father had, but all I got was cold fingertips and one big drop of rain that I flicked at Remy. He wiped it off and glared up at the canopy of leaves. "Derned old birds!"

I laughed.

"Go on! Laugh!" he said, jerking upright. "Fine deal when my own sister laughs!"

"Remy." I looked at him, smiling. "You're acting about ten years below yourself and a seven-year-old isn't very attractive in a frame the size of yours!"

He sank back and grinned. "Well, I bet I could. A craft wouldn't be so hard to build. I could use scrap metal—though why does it have to be metal? And we could check in the newspaper for when Canaveral says is the best time—"

"Remy—" the light in his eyes quenched at the tone of my voice —"how far is it to the moon?"

"Well, us—I'm not for sure. I think it's about 250,000 miles, give or take a couple of blocks."

"How far have you ever lifted a vehicle?" I asked.

"Well, at least five miles—with your help! With your help!" he hastened as I looked at him.

"And how far out of the atmosphere?" I asked.

"Why none at all, of course! Father won't let me—"

"And in free-fall? And landing in no air? And coming back?"

"All right! All right! Don't rub it in," he said sulkily. "But you wait!" he promised, "I'll get into Space yet!"

That evening, Father quirked an eyebrow when Remy said he wanted to start training to become a Motiver. Oh, he could learn it—most any of The People could—but it's a mighty uphill job of it if you aren't especially gifted for it. A gifted Motiver hardly needs any training except in how to concentrate on a given project for the time necessary. But Remy would have to start from scratch, which is only a notch or two above Outsider performance—which is mostly nil. Father and Remy both knew Remy was just being stubborn because he so wanted to go out into Space, but Father let him go to Ron for study and I got pretty lonely in the hours he spent away from camp. After all, what is there for a shadow to do when there's no one to follow around?

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

For a day or two I ranged above the near slopes and hills, astonishing the circling buzzards by peering over their thin, wide wings, or catching a tingly downward slide on the last slants of the evening sun through the Chimneys. The Chimneys are spare, angular fingers of granite that thrust themselves nakedly up among the wooded hills along one bank of the Cayuse. But exploring on your own stops being fun after while and I was pretty lonesome the evening I brought Mother a little cottontail rabbit I'd taken away from a coyote on the edge of night.

"I can tell he's hurt," I said, holding the soft, furry thing gently in my hands and securely in my Concern. It lay unwinking on my palms, its quick nose its only movement. "But I can't decide whether it's a break or a strain. Tell me again how to tell the difference."

Mother laid her hand softly on the creature after reassuring it with her Concern. "It's a strain," she said softly. "Don't you sense —" And the rest of it was thinking that has no separate words for it so I can't write it down. And I did finally Sense the strain in the rabbit's muscles and the difference between it and how a break in a bone would feel.

"Oh, yes," I said. "I won't forget again. Shall I let him go, then?"

"Better put him in the patient-pen," said Mother. "At least for the night. Nothing will fright him there and we can let him go tomorrow."

So we slipped him into the pen and Mother and I leaned over to watch him hide himself in the green tangle of growing things at the far end. Then I carefully did as Mother did. We reached inside ourselves to channel away the pain we had Sensed. That's one of the most important things to be learned if you're a Sensitive—which we both are. When Mother was a girl, she lived among Outsiders and she was almost destroyed before she found our Group and was taught how to Channel.

Still full of the warm, prayer-like feeling that follows the channeling, we walked back towards the house in the half dark.

"You've been missing Remy," said Mother.

"Yes," I sighed. "It wouldn't be so bad if we were back with the Group, but being up here till Father's shift is over makes it kinda lonesome. Even with Remy coming back here to sleep, it's not the same. There's nothing to do—"

Mother laughed. "I'd like a dime for every time a child has said that to a parent! Why not use this so empty time to develop a new Gift or Persuasion?"

"Like what?" I wasn't very enthusiastic.

"Well." Mother considered.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Why not something that would go along with being a Sensitive? You're Gifted with that already. Choose something that has to do with Sensing things. Take metal or water or some Awareness like that. It might come in handy sometime, and you could map the springs or ore deposits for the Group. Your father has the forestry maps for this area, but the People haven't mapped it yet."

Well, the idea was better than nothing, so that evening Mother helped me review the Awareness of water and metal and I set my mind to Group Memory that night so by morning I had a pretty good idea of the Basics of the job. It'd take years really to be an expert, but I could play around with it for the rest of the summer.

Water wasn't scarce enough in Cayuse Canyon to make looking for it much fun, though I loved the little blind stream I found in a cave above the creek, so I tried the metal Awareness and got pretty adept by the evening of the first day. Adept, that is, at finding camper's dumps and beer cans—which isn't much to brag about. It's like finding a telephone pole when you're really looking for a toothpick.

By the end of the week, I had fined down my Sensing. Hovering a hundred feet or so over the surface, I had found an old, two-tined fork buried under two and a half feet of silt at the base of one of The Chimneys, and an ox-shoe caught in a cleft of rock six feet above the creek on another of the Chimneys. Don't ask me how it got there.

"Big deal!" Remy shoved the shoe with his finger when I showed the family my spoils after supper that night. "Both of them iron—both manufactured. Big deal!"

I flushed and talked right back at him as I practically never do. "How far did you move the world today, wise guy? Was that the house I heard roaring past me this afternoon or a matchbox you managed to tilt off the table?"

Which was hardly fair of me because he was having a lot of trouble with his Motiving and had got his reactions so messed up that he could hardly lift anything now. Sort of a centipede trying to watch his feet when he walks. The trouble would clear up, of course, with further training, but Remy's not the patient type.

"Who's a wise guy?" Before I knew it, I was pressed against the ceiling, the light fixture too hot near the back of my neck.

"Remy!" Mother cried out. "Not at the table!"

"Put her down." Father didn't raise his voice, but I was tumbled back so fast that the hem of my skirt caught the flower bowl and nearly pulled it off the table.

"I'm sorry." Remy glared at his clenched hands on the table and shut us all out so completely that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

we all blinked, and he kept us out all the rest of the evening.

He hardly said goodby when he left next morning, kicking petulantly at the top of the piñyon tree by the gate as he went by. Mother and Father looked at each other and shook their heads like parents and Father folded his mouth like a father and I was sorry I had started the whole thing—though I'm not sure I did.

I had fun all day. I was so absorbed in sorting out the different junk I Sensed that I lost track of time and missed lunch completely. When I checked the shadows for the time, it was long past the hour and I was too far to bother with going home. I wanted to finish this part of The Chimneys before going home anyway. So I sighed and filled my empty stomach with fresh cold spring water and took off again, enjoying the sweep of wind that brushed my hair back from my neck and dried the perspiration.

Well, concentration paid off! Around about four o'clock I sensed a metal deep inside the last of the towering Chimneys. Or the first one, depending on which mountain you started counting from. Anyway, I sensed a metal near the base of the last one—and not iron and not manufactured! Excitedly I landed on the flank of the mountain and searched out the exact spot. I tore my shirt and scratched my cheek and broke two fingernails before I found the spot in the middle of a brush pile. I traced with my finger the short, narrow course. Wire gold. Six feet inside the solid rock beneath me. Almost four inches of it, as thick as a light bulb filament! I laughed at my own matchbox I'd tiled off the table, but I was pleased anyway. It was small, for sure, but I'd found it, hadn't I? From over a hundred feet up?

It was getting late and I was two-meal hungry, so I lifted up to the top of the last Chimney and teetered on its crumbling granite capstone to check my directions. I could short-cut home in a fraction of the time I'd taken to get here. The panorama laid out at my feet was so breathtakingly lovely that I could hardly leave it, but I finally launched myself in the direction of home. I cut diagonally away from The Chimneys, headed for the notch in the hills just beyond the old Selkirk mine. Half unconsciously I checked off metal as I passed above it. It was all ABC easily detected stuff like *barb wire fence, tin can, roofing, barrel hoop*—all with the grating feeling that meant rust.

Then suddenly there it was in my Awareness—slender and shiny and smooth and complicated! I checked in mid-air and circled. *Beer can, wire fence, horse shoe—slender and shiny and smooth and not iron!* I slid to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a landing on the side of the mountain. What could it be? A water tank? Some mining equipment? But it was unrusted, sleek and shiny and slender. But how tall? If only I knew a little more about sizes and contents. I could tell sizes of things I was familiar with, but not of this thing. I lifted and circled till I caught it again and narrowed my circle smaller and smaller until I was hovering. Over the old Selkirk mine. I grimaced, disappointed, and sensed, a little annoyed, the tangly feeling of all the odds and ends of silver left in the fifty-years-abandoned old mine, and the traces of a lot of other metals I didn't know yet. Then I sighed. Must have misinterpreted, but big and shiny, smooth and complicated—that's what it still felt like to me. Nasty break! Back to the Differentiations again, girl!

My hunger hurried my lifting for home so much that I had to activate my personal shield to cut the wind.

Before I even got in sight of the ranger station where we were spending our summer in our yearly required shift for the Group, I felt Remy calling for me. Well, maybe not me by name, but he was needing comfort in large quantities and who better than his shadow to give it to him. So I zeroed in on our walnut tree and stumbled to a stop just behind him as he sat hunched morosely over himself.

"I'm grounded," he said. "Ron says not to come back until I'm Purged. Father says I can start clearing brush out of the campsites tomorrow."

"Oh, Remy!" I cried, dismayed for his unhappiness. "Why?"

He grinned unhappily. "Ron says I can't learn as long as I'm trying to learn for the wrong reason."

"Wrong reason?" I asked.

"Yeah. He said I don't want to be a Motiver just to be a Motiver. I want to learn to be one so I can show people up, like Father and you and the Old Ones. He says I don't want to get into Space because of any real interest in Space, but because I'm mad at The People for not telling the world they can do it right now if they want to. He says—" Remy pulled a double handful of grass with sharp, unhappy yanks. "He says he has no intention of teaching me anything as long as I only want to learn it for such childish reasons. What does he think I'm going to do, drop another Hiroshima bomb?"

I checked firmly the surge of remembered sorrow at his words. "One of us *was* there in that plane," I said. "Remember?"

"But he didn't use any of the Designs or Persuasions in the dropping of the Bomb—"

"No. If he had, we probably never would have been able to help him out of the Darkness afterwards. Maybe Ron's afraid you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

might do something as bad as that if you learn to be a Motiver and then get mad."

"That's silly!" cried Remy. "I wasn't even born when the Bomb fell! And as if I'd ever do a thing like that anyway!"

"Maybe you wouldn't, but if you don't know how to be a Motiver, you can't. Remember, every person who ever did anything bad was seventeen once, and anger starts awfully early. Some kids start to crook their trigger fingers in their cradles—"

"I still think it's a lot of foolish fuss over nothing—"

"If it's nothing," I said, "Give it up."

"Why should I?" he flared. "I want—"

"What's the matter with you this summer, Remy?" I asked. "Why are you so prickly?"

"I'm not—!" he began. Then he flushed and lay back against the hillside, covering his eyes with his arm. "Sorry, Shadow," he said gently after a while. "I don't know what it is. I just feel restless and irritable. Growing pains, I guess. And I guess it bothers me that I don't have any special outstanding Gift like you do. I guess I'm groping to find out what I'm supposed to do. Do you think it's because we're part Outsider? Remember, Mother's a Blend."

"I know," I said, "But Mother managed to work out all her difficulties. You will too. You wait and see. Besides, a lot of kids that aren't Blends don't develop their Gifts until later. Just be patient." Then I sighed without sound, thinking that to tell Remy to be patient was like telling the Cayuse to flow uphill.

It wasn't until we were at the supper table that I remembered my find of the day. "I found gold today!" I said, feeling a flush of pleasure warming my face. "Real unmanufactured gold!"

"Well!" Father's fork paused in mid-air. "That's pretty good for a second week. When do we start carting it away? Will a bucket do, or shall I get a wheel barrow?"

"Oh, Father, don't tease," I said. "You know this isn't gold-like-that country! It was just a short wire of it, six feet inside a granite slope. But now I know what gold feels like—and silver and—and something slender and shiny—

I broke off, suddenly not wanting to detail all my findings. Fortunately my last words were swallowed up in activity as Remy cleared the table so Mother could bring in the dessert. It was his table week and my dishes week.

Remy put in the next morning hacking and grubbing to clear the underbrush out of some of the campsites along Cayuse Creek. Very few people ever come this far into the wilderness, but the Forestry Service has set up several camp places for them just in case, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Father has this area this summer. Any other year he'd be spending his time in his physics lab back with The Group, trying to find gadgets to help Outsiders do what The People do without gadgets.

Anyway, Father released Remy after lunch and I talked him into going metal Sensing with me.

"Shall I bring Father's bucket?" he teased. "It might be diamonds this time!"

"Diamonds!" I wrinkled my nose at him. "I'm *metal* Sensing, goon-child. Even you know diamonds aren't metal!"

I didn't do much Sensing on the way out, what with his chasing me over the ridge for my impertinence to my elders—he's a year older—and my chasing him upcreek for chasing me across the ridge. We were both laughing and panting by the time we got to The Chimneys.

The Chimneys? "Wait—" I held out my hand and we stopped in mid-flight. "I just remembered. Remy, what's slender and shiny and not iron and complicated?"

"What do you mean, slender? How slender? How complicated? Remy sat cross-legged in the air beside me. "Is it a riddle?"

"It's a riddle, all right, but I don't know the answer." And I told him all about it.

"Well, let's go over and see," he said, his eyes shining, his ears fairly quivering with interest. "If it's something at the Selkirk, at least we know *where* it is." We started off again. "Can't you remember anything that'd give you any idea of its size?"

"No-o-o," I said thoughtfully. "It could be most any size from a needle up to—up to—" I was measuring myself alongside my memory. "Gee, Remy! It could be higher than my head!"

"And shiny?" he asked. "Not rusted?"

"Shiny and not rusted."

We were soon hovering over the old Selkirk mine, looking down on the tailings dump, the scant clutter of falling-apart shacks at the mine opening.

"Somewhere there—" I started, when suddenly Remy caught me by the arm and we plummeted down like falling stars. I barely had time to straighten myself for landing before we were both staggering into the shelter of the aspens at the foot of the dump.

"What on earth!" I began.

"Hush!" Remy gestured violently. "Someone came out of the shack up there. An Outsider! You know we can't let Outsiders see us lifting! And we were right overhead!"

"I didn't even know there was anyone in the area," I said. "No one has checked in since we got here this Spring. Can you see them from here?"

Remy threaded his way through the clump of aspen and was peering out dramatically, twining him-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

self around the trunk of a tree that wasn't nearly big enough to hide him. "No," he said. "The hill hides him. Or them. I wonder how many there are."

"Well, let's stop lurking like criminals and go up and see," I said. "It's only neighborly—"

The trail up to the Selkirk was steep, rocky, and overgrown with brush and we were both panting when we got to the top.

"Hi!" yelled Remy, "anybody home?" There was no answer except the squawk of a startled jay. "Hey!" he yelled again, "anyone here?"

"Are you sure you saw someone?" I asked, "or is this another —"

"Sure I saw someone!" Remy was headed for the sagging shack that drooped against the slope of the hill.

It was too quick for me even to say a word to Remy. It would have been forever too late to try to reach him, so I just lifted his feet out from under him and sent him sprawling to the ground under the crazy paneless window of the shack. His yell of surprise and anger was wiped out by an explosive roar. The muzzle of a shotgun stabbed through the window, where smoke was eddying.

"Git!" came a tight, cold voice. "Git going back down that trail. There's plenty more buckshot where that came from."

"Hey, wait a minute." Remy hugged the wall under the window. "We just came to see—"

"That's what I thought." The gun barrel moved farther out. "Sneaking around. Prying—"

"No," I said. "You don't yell 'hi' when you're sneaking. We just wondered who our neighbors were. We don't want to pry. If you'd rather, we'll go away. But we'd like to visit with you—" I could feel the tension lessening and saw the gun waver.

"Doesn't seem like they'd send kids," the voice muttered, and a pale, old face wavered just inside the window. "You from the FBI?" the old man asked.

"FBI?" Remy knelt under the window, his eyes topping the sill. "Heck, no. What would the FBI be wanting up here?"

"Allen says the government—" He stopped and blinked. I caught a stab of sorrow from him that made me catch my breath. "Allen's my son," he said, struggling with some emotion or combination of emotions I hadn't learned to read yet. "Allen says nobody can come around, especially G-men—" He ran one hand through his heavy white hair. "You don't look like G-men."

"We're not," I laughed. "You just ask your son."

"My son?" The gun disappeared and I could hear the thump of the butt on the splinter old floor of the shack. "My son—" It was a carefully controlled phrase,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but I could hear behind it a great soaring wail. "My son's busy," he said briskly. "And don't ask what's he doing. I won't tell you. Go on away and play. We got no time for kids."

"We just wanted to say 'hi'," I hastened before Remy could cloud up at being told to go play. "And to see if you need anything—"

"Why should we need anything?" The voice was cold again and the muzzle of the gun came back up on the sill, not four inches from Remy's startled eyes. "I have the plans. Practically everything was ready—" Again the hurting stab of sorrow came from him and another wave of that mixture of emotions, so heavy a wave that it almost blinded me and the next thing I knew, Remy was helping me back down the trail. As soon as we were out of sight of the shack, we lifted back to the aspen thicket. There I lay down on the wiry grass and, closing my eyes, I channeled whatever the discomfort was, while Remy sat by sympathetically silent.

"I wonder what he's so tender of up there," he finally said after I had sighed and sat up.

"I don't know, but he's suffering from something. His thoughts don't pattern as they should. It's as though they were circling around and around a hard something he can't accept nor deny."

"Something slender and shiny and complicated?" said Remy idly.

"Well, yes," I said, casting back into my mind. "Maybe it does have something to do with that, but there's something really bad that's bothering him."

"Well, then, let's figure out what that slender, shiny thing is, then maybe we can help him figure out that much. . . . By the way, thanks for getting me out of range. I could have got perforated, but good—"

"Oh, I don't know," I said. "I don't think he was really aiming at you."

"Aiming or not, I sure felt drafty there when I saw what he was holding."

I smiled and went on with the original topic. "If only we could get up closer," I said. "I'm not an expert at this Sensing stuff yet."

"Well, try it anyway," said Remy. "Read it to me and I'll draw it and then we'll see what it is." He cleared a little space, shoving the aspen litter aside and taking up a twig, held it poised.

"I've studied hardly a thing about shapes yet," I said, lying back against the curve of the slope, "but I'll try." So I cleared my mind of everything and began to coax back the awareness of whatever the metal was at the Selkirk. I read it to Remy—all that metal so closely surrounded by the granite of the mountain and yet no intermingling! If you took away the metal there'd be nothing left but a tall, slender hole—

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

My eyes flipped open. "The mine shaft!" I cried. "Whatever it is, it's filling the mine shaft—the one that goes straight down. All the drifts take off from there!"

"So now we have a hole," said Remy. "Fill it up. And I'll bet it's just the old workings—the hoist—the cage—"

"No, it isn't." I closed my eyes and concentrated again, Sensing diagonally up through the hill and into the Selkirk. Carefully I detailed it to Remy contour by contour.

"Hey!" I sat up, startled at Remy's cry. "Look what we've made!" I leaned over his sketch, puzzling over the lines in the crumbly soil.

"It looks a little like a shell," I said. "A rifle shell. Oh, my gosh! Do you suppose that's what it is? That we've spent all of this time over a rifle shell?"

"If only we had some idea of relative size." Remy deepened one of the lines.

"Well, it fills the hole it's in," I said. "The hole felt like a mine shaft and that thing fills it."

"A rifle shell that big?" Remy flicked a leaf away with his twig. "Why that'd be big enough to climb into—"

Remy stiffened as though he had been jabbed. Rising to his knees, he grabbed my arm, his mouth opening wordlessly. He jabbed his twig repeatedly at the tailings dump, yanking my arm at the same time.

"Remy!" I cried, alarmed at his antics. "What on earth's the matter?"

"It's—" he gasped. "it's a rocket! A rocket! A space ship! That guy's building a space ship and he's got it down in the shaft of the Selkirk!"

Remy babbled in my ear all the way home, telling again and again why it *had* to be a space ship and, by the time we got home, I began to believe him. The sight of the house acted as an effective silencer for Remy.

"This is a secret," he hissed as we paused on the porch before going into the house. "Don't you dare say a word to anyone!"

I promised and kept my promise but I was afraid for Remy all evening. He's as transparent as a baby when he gets excited and I was afraid he'd give it away any minute. Both Mother and Father watched him and exchanged worried looks—he acted feverish. But somehow we made it through the evening.

His arguments weren't nearly so logical by the cold light of early morning and his own conviction and enthusiasms were thinned by the hard work he had to put in before noon at the camp sites.

Armed with half a cake and a half dozen oranges, we cautiously approached the Selkirk that afternoon. My shoulders felt rigid as we approached the old shack and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I Sensed apprehensively around for the shotgun barrel—I knew *that* shape! But nothing happened. No one was home.

"Well, dern!" Remy sat down by me on a boulder near the door. "Where d'you suppose he went?"

"Fishing, maybe," I suggested. "Or to town."

"We would have seen him if he were fishing on the Cayuse. And he's an Outsider—he'd have to use the road to go to town, and that goes by our place."

"He could have hiked across the hills instead."

"That'd be silly. He'd just parallel the road that way."

"Well, since he isn't here—" I paused, lifting an inquiring eyebrow.

"Yeah! Let's do. Let's go take a look in the shaft!" Remy's eyes were bright with excitement. "Put this stuff somewhere where the ants won't get into the cake. We'll eat it later, if he doesn't turn up."

We scrambled across the jumble of broken rock that was the top of the dump, but when we arrived where the mouth of the shaft should be, there was nothing but more broken rock. We stumbled and slipped back and forth a couple of times before I perched up on a boulder and, closing my eyes, Sensed for metal.

It was like being in a shiny, smooth flood. No matter on which side of me I turned, the metal was there and, with that odd illusion that happens visually some times, the metal under me suddenly seemed to cup upwards and contain me instead of my perching over it. It was frightening and I opened my eyes.

"Well?" asked Remy, impatiently.

"It's there," I said. "It's covered over, but it's there. We're too close, now, though. I can't get any idea of shape at all. It could be a barn door or a sheet of foil or a solid cube. All I know is that it's metal, it's under us, and there's lots of it."

"That's not much help." Remy sagged with disappointment.

"No, it's not," I said.

"Let's lift," said Remy. "You did better from the air."

"Lift? With him around?"

"He's not around now," said Remy.

"He might be and we just don't Sense him."

"How could we keep from it?" asked Remy. "We can always Sense Outsiders. He has no way to shield—"

"But if that thing *is* a rocket and he's in it, that means he'd be shielded—and that means there's some way to get in it—"

We looked at each other and then scrambled down the dump. It was pretty steep and rugged and we lifted part of the way. Otherwise we might have ended up at the bottom of a good sized rockslide—us under. We searched the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

base of the hill, trying to find an entrance. We searched all afternoon, stopping only a few minutes to shake the ants off of and out of the cake and eat it and the oranges, burying the peels carefully before we went back to work. We finally gave up, just before sunset, and sprawled in the aspen thicket at the base of the dump, catching our breath before heading home.

I raised up on one elbow, peering upward to the heights I couldn't see. "He's there now," I said, exasperated. "He's back. How'd he get past us?"

"I'm too tired to care," said Remy, rubbing the elbow he'd banged against a rock—and that's pretty tired for Remy.

"He's crying," I said softly. "He's crying like a child."

"Is he hurt?" Remy asked, straightening.

"No-o-o, I don't think so," I said, trying to reach him more fully. "It's sorrow and loneliness—that's why he's crying."

We went back the next day. This time I took a deep-dish apple pie along. Most men have a sweet tooth and miss desserts the most when they're camping. It was a juicy pie and, after I had dribbled juice down the front of me and down onto Remy where he lifted below, I put it into nice, level inanimate lift and let it trail behind me.

I don't know exactly what we expected, but it was rather an anticlimax to be welcomed casually at the Selkirk—no surprise, no shotgun, no questions, but plenty of thanks for the pie. Between gulps and through muffling mouthfulls, we learned that the old man's name was Thomas.

"Should have been Doubting Thomas," he told us unhappily. "Didn't believe a word my son said. And when he used up all our money buying—" He swallowed hard and blinked and changed the subject.

We never did find out much about him and, of course, ignored completely whatever it was in the shaft of the Selkirk. At least we did that trip and for many more that followed. Remy was learning patience the hard way, but I must admit he was doing wonderfully well for Remy. One thing we didn't find out was the whereabouts of his son. Most of the time for Thomas his son had no other name except My Son. Sometimes he talked as though his son were just over the hill. Other times he was so long gone that he was half forgotten.

Not long after we got on visiting terms with Tom, I felt I'd better alert Remy. "He's not completely sane," I told him. "Sometimes he's as clear as can be. Other times his thoughts are as tangled as baling wire."

"Old age," suggested Remy. "He's almost eighty."

"It might be," I said. "But he's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

carrying a burden of some kind. If I were a Sorter, I could Go-In to him and tell what it is, but every time he thinks of whatever is troubling him, his thoughts hurt him and get all tangled up."

"Harmless, though," said Remy.

"Yes?" I brought back to his mind the shotgun blast we had been greeted with. Remy moved uneasily. "We startled him then," he said.

"No telling what will startle him. Remember, he's not always tracking logically. We'd better tread lightly for a while."

One day about a week later, a most impatient week for Remy, we were visiting with Tom again—or rather watching him devour half a lemon pie at one sitting—when we got off onto mines and mining towns.

"Father said the Selkirk was quite a mine when it was new. They took over a million dollars worth of silver out of her. Are you working her any?" Remy held his breath as he waited Tom's response to this obvious fishing.

"No," said Tom. "I'm not a miner. Don't know anything about mines and ores and stuff. I was a sheet metal man before I retired." He frowned and stirred uneasily. "I can't remember much of what I used to do. My memory isn't so good any more. Not since my son filled me up with this idea of getting to the moon." I felt Remy freeze beside me. "He's talked it so much and worked at it so hard and sunk everything we ever owned into it that I can't think of anything else anymore either. It's like a horn blaring in my ears all the time. Gets so bad sometimes—" He pressed his hands to his ears and shook his head.

"How soon will you be blasting off?" Remy asked carefully casually.

"My son says there's only a little left to do. I ought to be able to figure it out from the plans."

"Where is your son?" asked Remy softly.

"My son's—" Tom stopped and frowned. "My son's—" His eyes clouded over and his face set woodenly. "My son said no one was to come around. My son said every one had to stay away." His voice was rising and he came to his feet. "My son said they'd come and try to stop us!" The voice went up another notch. "He said they'd come snooping and take the Ship away!" He was yelling now. "He said to keep them away! Keep them away until he—until he—" His voice broke and he grabbed for the nearest chunk of rock. I reached out quickly with my mind and opened his hand so it dropped the rock and, while he was groping for another, Remy and I took off down the hill, wordless and shaken. We clutched each other at the foot of the slope.

"It *is* a rocket!" stuttered Remy, shaken with delight. "I told you

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

so! A real rocket! A moon rocket!"

"He kept saying 'my son said,'" I shivered, "Something's wrong about that son of his."

"Why worry about that?" exulted Remy. "He's got a space craft of some kind and it's supposed to go to the moon."

"I worry about that," I said, "because every time he says 'my son' his mind tangles more. That's what triggered this madness."

Well, when we got back home, almost bursting with the news we couldn't share, Mother was brisking around gathering up some essential things. "It's an emergency," she said. "Word came from the Group. Dr. Curtis is bringing a patient out to us and he needs me. Shadow, you're to come with me. This will be a good chance for you to begin on real diagnosis. You're old enough now. Remy, you be good and take care of your father. You'd better be the cook and no more than two meals a day of fried eggs!"

"But, Mother—" Remy looked at me and frowned. "Shadow—"

"Yes?" Mother turned from the case she was packing.

"Oh, nothing," he said, his bottom lip pushing forward in his disappointment.

"Well, this'll have to be your exclusive little red wagon, now," I murmured as he reached down a case for me from the top shelf of the closet. "But drag it mighty carefully. If in doubt—lift!"

"I'll wave to you as we go by, headed for the moon!" he teased.

"Remy," I paused with a handful of nightgown poised above the case. "It might still be all a mad dream of Tom's. We've never seen the rocket. We've never seen the son. I could be mis-reading the metal completely. It'll be fun if you can find out for sure, but don't get your heart set on it too much. And be careful!"

Mother and I decided to take the pick-up truck because Father had the forestry jeep and we might need transportation if we went among Ousiders. So we loaded in our cases. Mother got in touch with Father and told him goodbye. As the pick-up lifted out of the yard and drifted upwards and away over the treetops, I leaned out and waved at Remy who was standing forlornly on the front porch.

It was a wonderful two weeks—in a solemn sort of way. We have a very small hospital. The People are pretty healthy, but Dr. Curtis, who is an Outsider friend of ours, brings patients out every so often for Mother to help him diagnose. That's her Gift—to put her hands on the suffering and read what the trouble is. So when he's completely puzzled with a case, he brings it out to Mother. She's too shy to go Outside. Besides, the People function more efficiently when they are among their own.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It wasn't easy two weeks because a Sensitive must experience whatever the patient is experiencing. Even if it is vicarious, it's still very real and very uncomfortable, especially for a beginner such as I am. One evening I thought I was going to die when I got so caught up in the smothering agony of a seizure that I forgot to channel and lost my way in the suffering. Mother had to rescue me and give me back my breath.

When we finally finished at the hospital, we headed home again. I felt as though I were ten years older—as though I had left home as a child and returned as an adult. I had forgotten completely about Tom and the rocket and had to grope for memory when Remy hissed to me, "It's real!" Then memory went off like a veritable rocket of its own and I nearly burst with excitement.

There was no opportunity that night to find out any details, but it made pleasant speculation before I fell asleep. Next morning we left right after breakfast lifting into the shiver morning chill, above the small mists that curled up from the *cienega* where antelope grazed, ankle deep in the pooling water or belly deep in dew-heavy wild flowers.

"No campsites?" I asked, as we left the flats behind us.

"I finished them last week," said Remy. "Father said I could have some time off. Which is a real deal because Tom needs so much help now." Remy frowned down at me as he lifted above me. "I'm worried, Shadow. He's sick. I mean more than a wandery mind. I'm afraid he'll be Called before—"

"Before the ship is done?" I asked with a squeeze in my heart that he should be still so preoccupied with his own dream.

"Exactly!" flashed Remy. "But I'm not thinking of myself alone. Sure I want the ship finished, and I want in it and out into Space. But I know Tom now and I know he's only living for this flight and it's bigger to him than his hope of Heaven or fear of Hell. You see, I've met his son—"

"You have!" I reached for his arm. "Oh, Remy! Really! Is he as —uh—eccentric as Tom? Do you like him? Is he—" I stopped. Remy was close to me. I should have been able to read his 'yes' or 'no' from the plainest outer edges of his thinking, but he was closed to me.

"What's wrong, Remy?" I asked in a subdued voice. "Is he worse than Tom? Won't he let you—"

"Wait and ask Tom," said Remy. "He tells me every day. He's like a child and he's decided he can trust me so he talks and talks and talks and always the same thing." Remy swallowed visibly. "It takes some getting used to—at least for me. Maybe for you—"

"Remy!" I interrupted. "We're almost there and we're still airborne. We'd better—"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not necessary," he said. "Tom's seen me lift lots of times and use lots of our Signs and Persuasions." Remy laughed at my astonishment. "Don't worry. It's no betrayal. He just thinks I've gone to a new-fangled school. He marvels at what they teach now-a-days and is quite sure I can't spell for sour apples or tell which is the longest river in South America. I told you he's like a child. He'll accept anything except the fact—" We were slanting down to the Selkirk.

"The fact—" I prompted. Then instinctively looked for a hiding place. Tom was waiting for us.

"Hi!" His husky, unsurprised voice greeted us as we landed. "So the sister got back? She's almost as good in the air as you are, isn't she? You two must have got an early start this morning. I haven't had breakfast yet."

I was shocked by his haggard face and the slow weakness of his movements. I could read illness in his eyes, but I winced away from the idea of touching his fragile shoulders or cramped chest to read the illness that was filling him to exhaustion. We sat quietly on the doorstep and smelled the coffee he brewed for breakfast and waited while he worried down a crumbly slice of bread. And that was his breakfast.

"I told my sister about the ship," Remy said gently.

"The ship—" His eyes brightened. "Don't trust many people to show them the ship, but if she's your sister, I trust her. But first—" His eyes closed under the weight of sorrow that flowed almost visibly down over his face. "First I want her to meet my son. Come on in." He stepped back and Remy followed him into the shack. I bundled up my astonishment and followed them.

"Remember how we looked for an entrance?" grinned Remy. "Tom's not so stupid!"

I don't know what all Tom did with things that clanked and pulleys that whined and boards that parted in half, but the end result was a big black square in the middle of the floor of the shack. It led down into a dark nothingness.

"He goes down a ladder," whispered Remy as Tom's towsled head disappeared. "But I've been having to help him hold on. He's getting awfully weak."

So, as we dropped down through the trap door, I lent my help along with Remy's and held the trembling old hands around the ladder rungs and steadied the feeble old knees as Tom descended. At the bottom of the ladder, Tom threw a switch and the subdued glow of a string of lights lead off along a drift.

"My son rigged up the lights," Tom said. "The generator's over by the ship." There was a series of thuds and clanks and a shower of dust sprinkled us liberally as the door above swung shut again.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

We walked without talking along the drift behind Tom as he scurried along the floor that had been worn smooth in spots by countless comings and goings.

The drift angled off to one side and when I rounded the corner I cried out softly. The roof had collapsed and the jaggedy tumble of fallen rock almost blocked the drift. There was just about edging-through space between the wall and the heaped up debris.

"You'd better channel," whispered Remy.

"You mean when we have to scrape past—" I began.

"Not that kind of channeling," said Remy.

The rest of his words were blotted out in the sudden wave of agony and sorrow that swept from Tom and engulfed me—not physical agony, but mental agony. I gasped and channeled as fast as I could, but the wet beads from that agony formed across my forehead before I could get myself guarded against it.

Tom was kneeling by the heaped up stones, his eyes intent upon the floor beside them. I moved closer. There was a small heap of soil beside a huge jagged boulder. There was a tiny American flag standing in the soil, and, above it on the boulder, was painted a white cross, inexpertly, so that the excess point wept down like tears.

"This," mourned Tom almost inaudibly, "is my son—"

"Your son!" I gasped. "Your son!"

"I can't take it again," whispered Remy. "I'm going on to the ship and get busy. He'll tell it whether anyone's listening or not. But each time it gets a little shorter. It took all morning the first time." And Remy went on down the drift, a refugee from a sorrow he couldn't ease.

". . . so I said I'd come out and help him," Tom's voice became audible and I sank down on the floor beside him.

"His friends had died—Jug, of Pneumonia, Buck, from speeding in his car to tell my son he'd figured out some angle that had them stopped. And there my son was—no one to help him finish—no one to go out to Space with, so I said I'd come out and help him. We could live on my pension. We had to, because all our money was spent on the Ship. All our money and a lot more has gone into the Ship. I don't know how they got started or who got the idea or who drew the plans or which one of them figured out how to make it go, but they were in the Service together and I think they must have pirated a lot of the stuff. That's maybe why they were so afraid the Government would find them. I don't hold with dishonesty and mostly my son don't either, but he was in on it along with the other two and I think he wanted to go more than any of them. It was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

like a fever in his blood. He used to say, 'If I can't make it alive, I want to make it dead. What a burial! Blackness of Outer Space for my shroud—a hundred million stars for my candles and the music of the spheres for my requiem!' And here he lies—all in the dark —" Tom's whole body dropped and he nearly collapsed beside me.

"I heard the crack and crumble," he whispered urgently. "I heard the roof give away. I heard him yell, 'NO! Not down here!' and I saw him race for the Ship and I saw the rocks come down and I saw the dust billow out—" His voice was hardly audible, his face buried in his hands. "The lights didn't go. They're strung along the other wall. After the dust settled, I saw—I saw my son. Only his hand—only his hand reaching—reaching for Space and a hundred million stars. Reaching —asking—wanting." He turned to me, his face awash with tears. "I couldn't move the rock. I couldn't push life back into him. I couldn't save my son, but I swore that I'd take his ship into Space—that I'd take something of his to say he made it, too. So I gave him the flag to hold. The one he meant to put where the other moon-shot landed. 'Litter-bugs!' he called them for messing up the Moon. He was going to put this flag there instead —so small it wouldn't clutter up the landscape. So he's been holding it—all this time—and as soon as Remy and I get the ship to going, we'll take the flag and—and —"

His eyes brightened and I helped him—shielding strongly from him—to his feet. "You can come, too, if you bring one of those lemon pies!" He had paid his admission ticket of sorrow and was edging past the heap of fallen rock.

"We'll save that to celebrate with when we get back," I said.

"Get back?" He smiled over his shoulder. "We're only going. We have a capsule to send back with all the information, and a radio to keep in touch as long as we can, but we never said anything about coming back. Why should we ever come back?"

Stunned, I watched him edge out of sight off down the drift, his sorrow for the moment behind him. I leaned against the wall, waiting for my channeling to be complete. I looked down at the small mound of earth and the quietly drooping flag and cried in a sudden panic— "We can't handle this alone! Not a one way trip."

I clasped my hands over my mouth, but Tom was gone. I hurried after him, the echo of my feet slipping on the jagged rocks cancelling out the frightened echo of my voice.

As I followed Tom down the drift I was trying frantically to find some way out of this horrible situation. Finally I smiled, re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lieved. "We just won't go," I said aloud. "We just won't go—"

And then I saw the Ship, curving gently up into the darkness of the covered shaft. It was almost with a feeling of recognition that I saw and sensed the quiet, efficient beauty of her, small, compact, lovely, and I saw inside where everything flowed naturally into everything else, where one installation merged so logically and beautifully into another. I stood and felt the wonderful wholeness of the ship. It wasn't something thrown together of tags and leftovers. It had grown, taking into itself each component part and assimilating it. It was a beautiful, functional whole, except for—

I followed the unfinished feeling and found Tom and Remy where they were working together. Tom's working consisted of holding a corner of a long sheet of diagrams while he dozed the facile doze of age and weariness. Remy had wound himself around behind some sort of panel and was making mysterious noises.

"Finally get here?" His voice came hollowly. "Take a look at the plans, will you? Tom left his reading specs in the shack. See where—" and his speech went off into visualization of something that was lovely to look at but completely incomprehensible to me. I gently took the sheet from Tom. He snorted and his eyes opened. He half grinned and closed his eyes again. I looked at the sheet. Lines went all over it. There were wiggly lines bisecting other lines and symbols all over it, but I couldn't find anywhere the thing Remy had showed me.

"He must have the wrong paper," I said, "There's nothing here like you want. There's only—" and I visualized back at him.

"Why, it's right there!" And he showed me a wiggly sign and equated it to the picture he had given me.

"Well, how am I to tell what's what when it's put down in such a mysterious way!" I was annoyed. Remy's feet wiggled and he emerged backwards.

"Ha!" he said, taking the sheet from me. "Anybody knows what a schematic diagram is. Anybody can see that this—" he waved it at me—"is *this*." And he showed me mentally a panel full of complications that I never could have conceived of.

"Well, maybe anyone can, but I can't," I said. "When did you learn to read this? In school?"

"'Course not in school," said Remy. "Tom showed me all the plans of the stuff that was left to do. He couldn't figure them out, so I'm doing it. No sweat."

"Remy," I said, pointing to a cluster of symbols on the page. "What's that?"

"Why, this, of course." And he visualized back the things that were symbolized.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Had you ever seen any of those parts before?" I asked seriously.

"No." Remy put down his tools and his own seriousness matched mine. "What use would they be around the People? They're things Tom's son brought."

"But you looked at all this—this—" I waved the page at him. "And you knew what went where?"

"Why, of course," said Remy. "How could I help it when there the thing is before me, big as life and twice as natural. Anybody—"

"Stop saying 'of course' and 'anybody,'" I said. "Remy, don't you realize that to most people these marks are nonsense until they put in hours and even years of study? Don't you realize that most people can't see three dimensionally from something two dimensioned? Don't you know even with study it takes a special knack to *see* the thing complete when you're working with blueprints and diagrams? A special knack—" My voice slowed. "A special Gift? Oh, Remy!"

"Special Gift?" Remy took the plan from my hand and looked at it. "You mean you can't see this solid enough that you could almost pick it up off the paper?"

"No," I said. "It's just lines and odd marks."

"And when we looked at the plans for the addition to the cabin the other night, couldn't you see that funny little room sitting on the paper?"

"No," I said, smiling at the memory. "Is that why you pinched at the paper?"

"Yes," Remy grinned. "I was trying to pick it up, to show Father that it wasn't quite right along the back wall, but he found the mistake in the plans and changed it. That straightened the back wall out okay."

"Remy," I caught his eyes with mine. "Maybe you *do* have a special Gift. Maybe this is what you've been looking for! Oh, Remy!"

"Special Gift—" Remy's eyes were clouded with speculation. "Special Gift?"

"I looked around the compartment where we were. "You changed some things, didn't you?"

"Not much," he said absently, still busy with his thoughts. "A few minor shapings that didn't look right—didn't fit exactly."

"That's why it all goes together so wonderfully, now. Oh, Remy, I'll bet you've found your Gift!"

Remy looked down at the paper. "My Gift!" His eyes glowed. "And it's to take me into Space!"

"But not back!" Tom's shaken voice startled us. "Strictly a one-way trip. We've got a capsule—"

"Yeah, Tom, yeah," said Remy, rolling his eyes at me. "Strictly a one-way trip."

I felt an awful cave-in inside me and my lips were stiff with fear. "Remy, you can't mean that! To go into Space and never come back!"

"It'd be worth it, wouldn't it?"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he asked, beginning to crawl back behind the panel again. "Tom, will you go get my yellow-handled screw driver? I left it in the drift by the tool chest.

"Sure, sure!" Tom scrambled to his feet and shuffled away.

"For Pete's sake!" hissed Remy, his eyes glaring around the end of the panel. "Go along with the gag! Don't get into an argument with Tom. I tried it once and he nearly died of it—and so did I. He got his shotgun again. He's going out to space, like making a trip to the cemetery. He knows he'll never make it back and he wouldn't want it any other way. All he wants is that little flag on the moon and his body somewhere out there. But he wants it so much we've *got* to give it to him. I'm not fool enough to want to leave my bones out there. Give me credit for a little brains!"

"Then it's okay? There is a way to bring the ship back?"

"It's okay! It's okay!" Remy's voice came muffled from behind the panel. "Hand me back the screw driver when Tom gets here with it."

So the days went, much too fast for us. We were working against the deadline of summer's ending and the fatal moment when Father and Mother would finally question our so-long absence from the cabin. So far we'd skipped the explanations. So it was that I felt a great release of tension on the day when Remy put down a tool, wiped his hands slowly on his jeans and said quietly, "It's finished."

Tom's face went waxen and I was afraid he'd faint. I felt my face go scarlet and I was afraid I'd explode.

"Finished," whispered Tom. "Now my son can go into Space. I'll go tell him." And he shuffled off.

"How are we ever going to talk Mother and Father into letting us go?" I asked. "I doubt that even with the ship all ready—"

"We won't tell them," said Remy. "They don't have to know."

"Not tell them?" I was aghast. "Go on an expedition like this and not tell them? We can't!"

"We must." Remy had put on a measure of maturity he had never showed before. "I know very well they'd never let us go if they knew. So you've got to keep the secret—even after we're gone."

"Keep the secret! You're not going without me. Where did you get such a fool idea! If you think for one minute—" I was shrieking now. Remy took hold of my arm.

"Be quiet!" he said, shaking me lightly. "I couldn't possibly let you go along under the circumstances. You've got to stay—"

"Under the circumstances," I repeated, my eyes intent on his face. "Remy, *is* there a way to bring the ship back?"

"I said there was, didn't I?" Remy returned my look steadily.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"To bring the ship back under its own power?"

Remy's hand dropped from my arm. "It'll get back all right. Stop worrying."

"Remy." It was my turn to take his arm. "Have you the instructions for a return flight? Tom said —"

"No," said Remy. His voice was hard and impersonal. "There are no instructions for a return flight —nor for the flight out. But I'll make it—there and back. If not with the ship, then by myself."

"Remy! You can't!" My protest crowded out of the horrified tumult of my thoughts. "Even the Old Ones wouldn't try it without a ship and they have *all* the Signs and Persuasions among them. You can't Motive the whole craft by yourself. You're not strong enough. You can't break it out of orbit— Oh Remy!" I was almost sobbing. "You don't even know all the things— inertia — trajectory — gravitational pull—it's too complicated. No one could do it by himself! Not even the two of us together!"

Remy moved away from my hand. "There's no question of your going," he said. "You told me— this is my own little red wagon and I'll find some way of dragging it, even if a wheel comes off along the way." He smiled a little and then sobered.

"Look, Shadow, it's for Tom. He's so wrapped up in this whole project that there's literally nothing for him in this life but the ship and the trip. He'd have died long ago if this hope hadn't kept him alive. You haven't touched him unshielded or you'd know in a second that he was Called months ago and is stubbornly refusing to go. I doubt if he'll live through blast-off, even with all the shielding I can give him. But I've *got* to take him, Shadow. I've just got to. It—it—I can't explain it so it makes sense, but it's as necessary for me to do this for Tom as it is for Tom to do it. Why he's even forgotten God except as a spy who might catch us in the act and stop us. I think even the actual blast-off or one look at the earth from Space will Purge him and he will submit to being Called and go to where his son is waiting, just the Otherside.

"I've got to give him his dream." Remy's voice faltered. "Young people have time to dream and change their dreams, but old people like Tom have time for only one dream, and if that fails them—"

"But Remy," I whispered forlornly. "You might never make it back."

"It is in the hands of The Power," he said soberly. "If I'm to be Called, I'm to be Called."

"I don't think you're right," I said thickly, finding it difficult after all these years to contradict Remy in anything of importance. "You're trying to catch the sun in a sieve—and you'll die of it!" Tears

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

were wet on my face. "I can't let you—I can't—"

"It isn't for you to say 'no' or 'go'," said Remy, flatly. "If you won't help, don't hinder—"

Tom was back, holding out his hands, bloodstained across the palms.

"Come help me," he panted. "I can't get the rocks off my son—"

Remy and I exchanged astonished glances.

"But, Tom . . ." I took one of his hands in mine to examine the cut flesh—and was immediately caught up in Death! Death rolled over me like a smothery cloud. Death shrieked at me from every corner of my mind. Death! Death! Rebellious, struggling Death! Nothing of the solemn Calling. Nothing of preparation for returning to the Presence. I forced my stiff fingers to open and dropped his hand. Remy had my other hand, pulling me away from Tom, his eyes anxiously on me.

"But, Tom," he said into the silence my dry mouth couldn't fill, "we're going to take the little flag. Remember? That's to be the memorial for your son—"

"I promised my son I'd go into Space with him," said Tom serenely. "It cuts both ways. He's going into space with me. Only there are so many rocks. Come help me, you kids. We don't want to be late." He wiped his palms on the seat of his pants and started back down the drift.

"Wait," called Remy. "You help us first. We can't go anywhere until we fuel up. You've got to show me the fuel dump. You promised you would when the Ship was finished. Well, it's finished now—all but pumping the fuel in."

Tom stopped. "That's right," nodded his head. "That's right." He laughed. The sound of it crinkled my spine. "I'm nobody's fool. Always keep an ace in the hole."

We followed him down another drift. "Wonder what fuel they have," said Remy. "Tom either wouldn't say, or didn't know. Never could get a word out of him about it except it would be there when we were ready for it. The fuel compartment was finished before we ever found him. He wouldn't let me go in there. He has the key to it."

"It's awfully far from the Ship," I worried. "How're we going to get it back there?"

"Don't know," Remy frowned. "They must have had something figured out. But if it's liquid—"

Tom had stopped at a padlocked door. He fumbled for a key and, after several abortive attempts, found the right one and opened the lock. He flung the door wide. There was a solid wall of metal blocking the door, a spigot protruding from it was the only thing that broke its blank expanse.

"Liquid, then," whispered Remy. "Now, how on earth—"

Tom giggled at our expressions.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Used to keep water in here. S'all gone now. Nothing but the fuel—" He pushed a section of the metal. It swung inward. It had been cut into a rude door.

"There 'tis!" cried Tom. "There 'tis."

At first we could see nothing because our crowding into the door shut out all the light that came from behind us, then Tom shuffled forward and the shaft of light followed him. He stooped and fumbled, then turned to us, lifting his burden triumphantly. "Here 'tis," he repeated. "You gotta put it in the Ship. Here's the key to the compartment. I'll go get my son."

Remy grasped and almost dropped the thing Tom had given him. It was a box or something like a box. A little more rectangular than square, but completely featureless except for a carrying handle on each end and a smooth, almost mirror-like surface on the top.

"What is it?" I asked. "How does it work?"

"I don't know." Remy was hunkered down by it on the floor, prodding at it with curious fingers.

"Maybe it's a solid fuel of some kind. It must be. Tom says it's the fuel."

"But why such a big fuel compartment if this is all that goes in it?" I had sensed the big empty chamber several times—padlock and all.

"Well, the only answer I have to that is let's go put it where it belongs and maybe we'll see."

We carried the object between us, back to the Ship and into the fuel compartment—at least what was so labeled on the plans. We put it down on the spot indicated for it and fastened it down with the metal clamps that were situated in just the right places to hold the object. Then we stepped back and looked the situation over. The object sat there in the middle of the floor—plenty of room all around it and above it. The almost mirror surface reflected cloudily the ceiling above. There were no leads, no wires, no connections, nothing but the hold-clamps and they went no farther into the structure of the floor than was necessary to hold them secure.

"Remy?" I looked at his mystified face. "How does it work? Do the plans say?"

"There aren't any plans about this room," he said blankly, searching back in his memory of the plans that were available. "Only a label that says 'fuel room.' There's one notation. I couldn't figure it out before. It says, 'After clamps are secure, coordinate and lift off!!!!' With four exclamation points. That's all. You see, Tom had only the plans for finishing the Ship. Nothing for the actual trip."

"And you thought you could—" I was horrified.

"Oh, relax, Shadow," said

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Remy. "Of course I could see how everything fitted into everything and what the dial readings meant *after* we got started, but—" His voice stopped and his thoughts concentrated on the plans again. "Nowhere a starter button or lever —" He bit his lip and frowned down at the object. In the silence we heard a clatter of rock and Tom's voice echoing eerily, "Come on out, Son. It's time to go! Rise and shine!"

Both of us listened to Tom's happy chant and we just looked at each other.

"What'll we do, Shadow," asked Remy helplessly. "What'll we do?"

"Maybe Tom knows more about this," I suggested. "Maybe we can get him to talk." I shuddered away from the memory of his hand in mine.

So we went to Tom where he was clawing at the broken rock, trying to free his son, the tiny flag still standing upright in the little mound of earth. Tom was prying at a rock that, if he freed it, would bring half the slide roaring down upon him.

"Tom!" Remy called. "Tom!" And finally got his attention. "Come down here. I need help."

Tom scrambled awkwardly down the slope, half-falling the last little way. And I let him stumble because I couldn't bear to touch him again.

"Tom, how does that fuel work?" Remy asked.

"Work? Why just like you'd think a fuel would work," said Tom wonderingly. "You just install it and take off."

"What connects it to the engines?" asked Remy. "You didn't give me that part of the plans."

"What engines?" grinned Tom.

"Whatever makes the Ship go!" Remy's patience was running out rapidly.

"My son makes the Ship go," said Tom, chuckling.

"Tom!" Remy took him by his frail shoulders and held him until the wander-eyes focused on his face. "Tom, the Ship's all ready to go, but I don't know how to start it. Unless you can tell me, *we—can't—go!*"

"Can't go?" Tom's eyes blinked with shock. "Can't go? We have to go! We have to! I promised!" The contours of his face softened and sagged to a blur under the force of his emotion. "We gotta go!" He shook Remy's hands roughly off his shoulders and pushed him staggering away. "Stupid brat! 'Course you can't make it go! My son's the only one that knows how!" He turned back to the heap of stone. "Son!" His voice was that of a stern parent. "Get outa there. There's work to be done and you lie there lazing!" He began tearing again at the jagged boulders.

We moved away from him—away from the whirlwind of his emotions and the sobbing, half vocal panting of his breath. We re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

treated to the ladder that lead up to the cabin, and, leaning against it, looked at each other.

"His son's been under there for months—maybe a year," Remy said dully. "If he uncovers him now—" He gulped miserably. "And I can't make the Ship go. After all your fussing about making the trip, and here I am stuck. But there *are* engines—at least there are mechanisms that work from one another after the flight begins. I don't think that little box is all the fuel. I'll bet there was liquid fuel somewhere and it's all evaporated or run off or something." He gulped again and leaned against the foot of the ladder.

"Oh, Shadow," he mourned. "At first this was going to be my big deal. I was going to help Tom find his dream—and all on my own. It was my declaration of independence to show Father and Ron that I could do something besides show off—and I guess that was showing off, too. But, Shadow, I gave that all up—I mean showing them. All I wanted was for Tom—" His voice broke and he blinked fast. "And his son—" He turned away from me and my throat ached with his unshed tears.

"We're not finished yet," I said, "Come on back."

There was a silence in the drift that sounded sudden. Nowhere could we hear Tom. Not a stone grated against another stone. Not a cry nor a mumbled word. Remy and I exchanged troubled looks as we neared the jagged heap of broken rock.

"Do you suppose he had a heart attack?" Remy hurried ahead of me, edging past the rock fall.

"Remy!" I gasped. "Oh, Remy, come back!" I had Sensed ahead of him and gulped danger like a massive swallow of fire. "Remy!" But it was too late. I heard him cry out and the sudden triumphant roar of Tom's voice. "Gotcha!"

I pressed myself against the far side of the drift away from the narrow passageway and listened.

"Hey, Tom!" Remy's voice was carefully unworried. "What you got that cannon for? Looks big enough from this end for me to crawl in."

"'Tain't a cannon," said Tom. "It's the shotgun my son gave me to guard the Ship so'st you couldn't kill him and keep the Ship from taking off. Now you've killed him anyway, but that's not going to stop us."

"I didn't kill—"

"Don't lie to me!" The snarling fury in Tom's voice scared me limp-legged. "He's dead. I uncovered his hand—my son's dead! And you did it! You pushed all that stuff down on him to try to hide your crime, but murder will out. You killed my son!"

"Tom, Tom," Remy's voice was coaxing. "I'm Remy, remember? You showed me where your son

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

lay. Remember the little flag—"

"The little flag—" Tom's voice was triumphant. "Sure, the little flag. He was going to put it on the moon. So you killed him. But now *you're* going to put it on the moon —or die in the attempt." He laughed. It sounded like two stones being rapped together. "Or die in the attempt! Get going!"

"But Tom—there's no fuel!" Protested Remy.

"You got what was in the tank room, didn't you?" demanded Tom. "Well, then, get to flying. My son said it would go. It'll go!"

And I heard their footsteps die off down the drift and Remy's distress came back to me like a scarlet banner. "Shadow! Shadow!"

I don't remember racing back to the ladder or opening the trap door or leaving the shack. My first consciousness of where I was came as I streaked over the ridge, headed for home. The stars—when had night come?—the treetops, the curves of the hills all lengthened themselves into flat ribbons of speed behind me. I didn't remember to activate my shield until my eyes were blinded with tears.

I hit the front porch so fast that I stumbled and fell and was brought up sharp with a rolling crash against the front door. Before I could get myself untangled, Mother and Father were there and Mother was checking me to see if I was hurt.

"I'm all right," I gasped, "But Remy—Remy!"

"Shadow, Shadow—" Father gathered me up, big as I am, and carried me into the house and put me down on the couch. "Shadow, clear yourself before you try to begin. It'll save time." And I forced myself to lie back quietly, though my tears ran hotly down into both my ears—and let all the wild urgency and fear and distress drain out of my mind. Then, as we held each others' hands, our three minds met in the wordless communication of the People.

Thoughts are so much faster than words and I poured out all the details in a wild rush—now and then feeling the guidance of my father leading me back to amplify or make clear some point I'd skidded by too fast.

"And now he's there with a madman pointing a shotgun at him and he can't do a thing—or maybe he's already dead—"

"Can we handle him?" Father had turned to Mother.

"Yes," she whispered whitely. "If we can get there in time."

Again the meteoric streaking across the dark hills. And Mother's reaching out ahead, trying to find Tom—reaching, reaching. After an eternity, we swung around the shoulder of a hill and there was the Selkirk—but different! Oh, different!

A shiny, needle-sharp nose was towering above the shack, the bro-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ken rock and shale had been shed off on all sides like silt around an ant hole. And the Ship! The Ship was straining towards the stars! Even as we watched, the nose wavered and circled a wobbly little circle and settled back again, out of sight in the shadows.

"Remy's trying to lift it!" I cried. "A thing that size! He'll never make it— And then Tom—"

We watched the feeble struggle as the nose of the ship emerged again from the shaft—not so far this time—much more briefly. It settled back with an audible crash and Mother caught her breath. "There!" she breathed, clasping her hands. "There!" Slowly she drifted down towards the shack, holding firmly whatever it was that she had caught. Father and I streaked to the shack and down the ladder. We rushed along the drift, past the huddle of rocks, and into the shaft. It took Father a fumbling eternity to find how to get into the Ship. And there we found them both—Tom sprawled across his gun, his closed eyes sunken, his face a death mask of itself. And Remy—Remy was struggling to a sitting position, his hand pushing against the useless box from the tank room. He smiled a wavery smile and said in a dazed voice, "I have a little Shadow, . . . That goes in and out with me . . . And what can be the use of her . . . I see, I see, I see—"

Then he was held tight in Father's arms and I turned my tears away only to be gathered into Mother's arms. And Tom slept peacefully the quiet sleep Mother had given him as we had a family type wallow in tears and sobs and murmurs and exasperated shakings and all sorts of excited explanations and regrets.

It was a much more solemn conclave back at the house later on. Tom was still sleeping, but in our back bedroom now. I think Mother was afraid to waken him for fear the shock of opening his eyes on Earth might kill him. She had experienced his gigantic, not-to-be-denied, surge toward Space before she had Slept him, and knew it for the unquenchable fire it was.

Of course by the time we finally reduced to vocal words, most of the explanations had been made—the incredulity expressed, the reprimands given and the repentence completed—but the problem of Tom was still unanswered.

"The simplest way, of course," said Remy, "is just to write 'finis' to the whole thing, wake Tom up, and then hold his funeral."

"Yes," said Father. "That would be the simplest."

"Of course, Mother and Shadow will have to be ready to channel instantly to by-pass that agonized moment when Tom realizes he has been betrayed." Remy was inspecting his jagged thumbnail and didn't meet Father's eyes.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Bethie, what do you think?" Father turned to Mother.

She blushed pinkly—that's where I get my too-ready coloring up—and murmured, "I think we ought to look at the Ship at least," she said. "Maybe that would help us decide, especially if we have Ron look it over, too."

"Okay, tomorrow." Father parted the curtain at the big window. "Today." he amended as he blinked at the steely grey light of dawn. "Today we'll get in touch with him and take a look. After all, the Ship *is* finished." And he turned away with a sigh, only a faint quirk at the corner of his mouth to betray the fact that he knew Remy and I were having a hard time containing our jubilation.

After lunch—even our frantic impatience couldn't pry Mother and Father away from what seemed such minor matters—Ron finally arrived and we all went out to look the Ship over. Remy and I streaked on ahead of the others and I laughed as I caught myself visualizing me dusting the ship frantically from end to end so it'd look its best for our visitors.

There it was! The shaft at least, with the concealing shale and rock shed away on all sides. When we arrived above it, we could see the gleam of the nose of the Ship. In all the excitement the night before, we had forgotten to conceal it. But it didn't matter now. Soon that bright nose would be lifting! Remy and I turned joyous summersaults as we shot down to the old shack.

The men—I include Remy in that—were like a bunch of kids with a new toy. They toured the Ship, their eyes eager and seeking, their manner carefully casual, their hands touching and drinking in the wonder of it. A space craft! Remy's replies to their questions were clipped and practically monosyllabic. His containment surprised me and I wondered if this was a foretaste of what he'd be like as an adult. Of course, Ron's being there—the head Motiver of the Group—may have awed him a little, but it wasn't awe in his eyes, it was assurance. He *knew* the Ship.

Mother took advantage of the preoccupation of the men to get in touch with Valancy and, through her, with Dr. Curtis who hadn't gone back Outside yet. I suppose they discussed Tom's condition and what—if anything—could be done for him. Mother was sitting near a wall of the fuel room, to all appearances, daydreaming.

So again I was a Shadow. Not a part of the inspection team—not meshed with Mother. I sighed and wandered over to the fuel box where it sat lonesomely in the middle of the floor. I lay down on my stomach beside it and looked at the dully shining upper surface. It reflected softly the light in the room,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

but the reflection seemed to come from deeper into the box than just the upper surface. It had depth to it. It was like looking at the moon. I have never quite believed that the light of the moon is just a reflection of the sun, especially a full moon when the light seems to have such depth, such dimension. And now—and now—if the ship were found space-worthy, we'd be able to see first hand if the moon had any glowing of its own.

I caught my own eyes shadowed in the surface and thought, *We'll be going up and up and more up than anyone has ever been before —lifting, soaring, rising—*

Mother cried out. Everything shook and moved and there was a grinding, grating sound. I heard the men shout from somewhere in the ship. Frightened, I rolled away from the fuel box and cried, "Mother!"

There was another scraping sound that shook the ship, and then a crunching thud. For a half second there was silence and then a clatter of feet as the men rushed into the fuel room, and Father, seeing us unhurt, was demanding, "Who lifted the ship!"

"Lifted the ship?" Remy's jaw was ajar. Father's eyes stabbed him. "Did you Remy?"

"I was with you!" Remy protested.

"Bethie?"

Mother colored deeply and her eyes drifted shyly away from the sternness of Father's face. "No," she said, "I'm not a Motiver. I was talking with Valancy."

I scrambled to my feet, my eyes wide, my color rising as Mother's had. "Father, I'll bet I did it!"

"You *bet* you did it?" Father was annoyed. "Don't you know?"

"I'm—I'm not sure," I said. "You know I'm not even as much a Motiver as Mother is. I still have to struggle to lift the pick-up, but —but I was looking at the fuel box and thinking. Father, I'll try it again. You and Ron had better stand by, just in case."

I lay down beside the box again, my eyes intent on the surface, and consciously lifted with all my might.

There was no grinding, grating this time. There was a shriek of metal on stone, a gasp from Mother as her knees buckled under the sudden upthrust, and Father's voice came clear and commanding, "Let go, Shadow. I've got it."

Light was streaming into the ship from windows we'd hardly noticed before. We all exchanged astonished looks then rushed to look out. We were hovering above the Selkirk—hundreds of feet above the gaping shaft visible off to one side. The scraping on its walls had thrown us sideways.

Father turned to Ron and said, "Take over and maintain, will you?" Then he knelt beside the little box, prodding it with his fingers, smoothing it with his palm.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Then he said, "Release to me," and, kneeling there, he brought the nose of the ship down so we lay horizontal to the ground. We all started sliding down as the floor slanted, but we lifted and waited until a wall became a floor, then Father moved the ship to an open flat below the Selkirk and brought it down gently on its side.

We all gathered around him as he stood looking at the box that was now head-high on the wall. We all looked at it and then Father's voice came slow and wonderingly, "It's an amplifier! Why, with that, it wouldn't even take a Motiver to make it to the moon. Three or four people lifting, coordinating in this, this amplifier, could do it, if they didn't tire."

"'Coordinate and lift off!'" cried Remy, "*Four* exclamation points!"

Father had laid the Ship on its side so we could find what damage had been done by Remy and me when we churned the poor thing up and down in the shaft. Mother and I went back home to check on Tom and to ready things for the voyage. No one needed to say we'd go. We all knew we'd go. The men were busy repairing the beat up under-carriage or whatever you'd call that part of the Ship, and we brought a picnic supper out to them a little while before sunset.

We all sat around on the flat. I sat on an ant hill first and moved in a hurry. We ate and feasted our eyes on the Ship. Remy had come out the other side of ecstacy and was serenely happy. Father and Ron were more visibly excited than he. But then they hadn't lived with the Ship and the idea as long as Remy had.

Finally a silence fell and we just sat and watched the night come in from the east, fold by fold of deepening darkness. In the half light came Ron's astonished voice.

"Why, that's what it is! That's what it is!"

"That's what what is?" came father's voice, dreamily from where he lay looking up at the darkening sky.

"The Ship," said Ron. "I've been trying all afternoon to remember what it reminds me of. Now I know. It's almost the same pattern as our life-slips."

"Our life-slips?" Father sat up slowly. "You mean the ones the People escaped in when their ships were disabled entering Earth's atmosphere?"

"Exactly!" Ron's voice quickened. "It's bigger and it's cluttered with a lot of gadgets we didn't have, but basically it's almost identical! Where did those fellows get the design of our life-slips? We didn't keep any. We don't need to with our Group memory—"

"And its motive power." Father's voice was thoughtful. "It's the power the People use. And Tom's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

son was supposed to know how to make it go. Do you suppose Tom —"

"No." Mother's voice came softly in the darkness. "I Sorted him after we took him to the house. He's not one of Us."

"His wife then, maybe," I said. "So many of us were scattered after the crossing. And their son could have inherited—" My voice trailed off as I remembered what his son had inherited—the darkness, the heap of stones and no chance ever for the stars, not even a reflection of them.

"We could rouse Tom and ask?" offered Remy questioningly.

"Tom is past remembering," said Mother. "He's long since been Called and as soon as we waken him, he will be gone."

"Well," Ron sighed. "We don't *need* to know."

"No," I admitted. "But it would be fun to know if Our Own built the ship."

"Whoever did," said Father, "is Our Own whether he ever knew the Home or not."

So we went, the next day.

But first, Ron and Father spent a quiet hour or so in the drift and emerged bearing between them a slender pine box with a small flag fluttering atop it. By now the Ship was upright again and Remy, Mother and I had provisioned it. When we were ready to go, we all went back to the house and got Tom, still and lifeless except for the flutter of a pulse faintly in his throat and a breathing that seemed to stop forever after each outflowing sigh. We brought him, cot and all, and put him in the Ship.

And then, our Voyage Prayer and the lift-off—not blast off. No noise pushed us on our way nor stayed behind to shout of our going.

Slowly, at first, the earth dropped behind us, alternately convex and concave, changing sometimes from one to the other at a blink of the eyes. I won't tell you in detail how it all looked. I'll let you find it all new when you make your first trip. But I will say my breath caught in a sob and I almost wept when first the whole of earth outlined itself against the star-blazing blackness of space. At that point, Ron and Father put the ship on maintain while they came and looked. We had very little to say. There are no word patterns yet for such an experience. We just stood and worshipped. I could feel unsaid words crowding up against my wonder-filled heart.

But even a wonder like that can't hold the restlessness of a boy for long, and Remy soon was drifting to all parts of the ship, clucking along with the different machines that were now clucking back at him as they activated to keep the ship habitable for us. He was loving every bolt and rivet, every revolution and flutter of dial,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because they were his, at least by right of operation.

Mother and I lasted longer at the windows than Remy. We were still there when Ron and Father finally could leave the ship on maintain and rejoin us.

I'm the wrong one to be telling this story if you want technical data. I'm an illiterate for anything like that. I can't even give you the time it took. Time is the turning of the earth and we were free of that tyranny for the first time in our lives.

I know that finally Father and Ron took the Ship off maintain and swung it around to the growing lunar wonder in our windows and I watched again that odd curve and collapse sequence as we plunged downward.

Then we were there, poised above the stripped unmovingness of the lunar landscape. We landed with barely a thud and Father was out, testing his personal shield to see if that would be sufficient protection for the time needed to do what we had to do. It was. We all activated our shields and stepped out, closing the door carefully behind us to safeguard the spaced gasping of Tom.

We stood there looking up at the full Earth, losing ourselves in its flooding light and I found myself wondering if perhaps it wasn't only the reflection of the sun, if Earth had its own luminousness.

After a while we went back in and warmed ourselves a little and then the man brought out the slender pine box and laid it on the pumicey crunch of the ground. I stirred the little flag with my fingers so that it might flutter its last flutter.

Then inside the ship they lifted Tom to a window. Mother Went-in to him before she woke him completely and told him where we were and where his son was. Then she awakened him gently. For a moment his eyes were clouded. His lips trembled and he blinked slowly—or closed his eyes, waiting for strength. He opened them again and looked for a long moment at the bright curve of the plain and the spangled darkness of the sky.

"The moon," he murmured, his thin hand clenching on the rim of the window. "We made it, Son, we made it! Let me out. Let me touch it."

Father's eyebrows questioned Mother and her eyes answered him. We lifted him from the cot and, enveloping him in our own shields, moved him out the door. We sustained him for the few staggering steps he took. He half fell across the box, one hand trailing on the ground. He took up a handful of the rough gravel and let it funnel from his hand to the top of the box.

"Son," he said, his voice surprisingly strong. "Son, dust thou art, go back to dust. Look out of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

wherever you are up there and see where your body is. We're close enough that you ought to be able to see real good." He slid to his knees, his face resting against the undressed pine. "I told you I'd do it for you, Son."

We straightened him and covered him with Mother's double wedding ring patchwork quilt, tucking him gently in against the long, long night. And I know at least four spots on the moon where water has fallen in historical time —four salty, wet drops, my own tears. Then we said the Parting Prayers and returned to the Ship.

We went looking for the littering that had annoyed Tom's son so much. I found it, sensing its metal from miles farther than I could have among the distractions of earth. Remy wanted to lift it right back out into space, but Father wouldn't let him. "It wouldn't change things," he said. "It did get here first. Let it stay."

"Okay, then," said Remy, "But with this on it." He pulled a flag out of his pocket and unfolded it. He spread it carefully as far as it would go over the metal and laid a chunk of stone on each corner. "To keep the wind from blowing it away," he grinned, stepping back to look it over. "There, that takes the cuss off it!"

So we took off again. We made a swoop around behind the moon, just to see what it was like, and we were well on our way home before it dawned on me that I hadn't even got one pebble for a souvenir.

"Don't mind," said Mother, smiling as she remembered other rock collecting trips of mine. "You know they never look as pretty when you get them home."

Now we're back. The Ship is stashed away in the shaft. We may never use it again. The fire of Remy's enthusiasm has turned to plans and blue prints and all things pertaining to his Gift, his own personal Gift, apparently the first evidence of a new Gift developing among us. He's gone in so much for signs and symbols and schematic diagrams that he'd talk in them if he could. Personally I think he went a trifle too far when he drew a schematic diagram of me and called it a portrait. After all! Mother and Father laughed at the resultant horror, but Remy thinks if he keyed colors in he might have a new art form. Talk about things changing!

But what will never, never change is the wonder, the indescribable wonder to me of seeing Earth lying in space as in the hollow of God's hand. Everytime I return to it, I return to the words of the Psalmist—the words that welled up in me unspoken out there half way to the moon.

When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; What is man that thou art mindful of him . . .

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE MAGAZINE OF Fantasy and Science Fiction

MARKET PLACE

BOOKS—MAGAZINES

SCIENCE-FICTION book bargains. List free Werewolf Bookshop, Verona 15, Pa.

Locate any book. Aardvarks Fantasy, Box 668, San Diego 12, Calif.

FOR SALE—250 paperbacks (½ SF), 50 cloth SF. Good condition. Best offer takes. R. Herschbach, Chokio, Minn.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

FREE Book "990 Successful, Little-Known Businesses". Work home! Plymouth—449W, Brooklyn 4, New York.

Letterheads, Envelopes, Sales letters, Price lists, Catalogs, Booklets, Wedding invitations—printed at low rates. Send for price list and free quote on your printing job. Aton Offset, 202 W. 79th St., Rm. 2W, N. Y 24

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

COMPLETE YOUR HIGH SCHOOL at home in spare time with 65-year-old school. Texts furnished. No classes. Diploma. Information booklet free. American School, Dept. X334, Drexel at 58th, Chicago 37, Illinois.

FOR CONTEST FANS

WIN CONTESTS! Write for copy of "Prize Ideas" the publication that has helped our students win over $4,000,000 in prizes. Packed with winning aids, current contest news, entries that have won. Send 25¢ in coin to cover postage and handling. All-American School, Dept. FF, 1429 Spruce St., Philadelphia 2, Pa.

HYPNOTISM

Free Illustrated, Hypnotism Catalogue. Write: Powers, 8721 Sunset, Hollywood 46, California.

LEARN WHILE ASLEEP, Hypnotize with your recorder, phonograph. Astonishing details, sensational catalog free. Sleep-Learning Research Association, Box 24-FS, Olympia, Washington.

NEW CONCEPT of learning self-hypnosis! Now on tape or record! Free Literature. McKinley-Smith Co. Dept. T16, Box 3038, San Bernardino, Calif.

HYPNOTISM, self-hypnotism. Professional methods. Free brochures. Dr. Azadian, 1035 N. Fulton—Dept. 1, Fresno, Calif.

Subliminal Conditioning—Hypnotic Gray Sound Free Information—Audio-Sonic Laboratories, Box 8112, Amarillo, Texas.

SERVICES—AUTHORS

AUTHORS: Sumbit your manuscripts for free editorial evaluation. We publish work by new authors on all subjects: poetry, fiction, non-fiction, juveniles, religious studies. Greenwich Book Publishers, Attention Mr. Clark, 489 Fifth Ave., N.Y.C.

MISCELLANEOUS

LEG IRONS, $7.95. Handcuffs, $7.95. Leather Restraints; Fetters; Collector's specialties. Catalog 50¢. Thomas Ferrick, Box 12K, Newburyport, Mass.

STRANGE UNIQUE ITEMS, catalog 10¢. The rare and unusual. Black Magic Shop, Dept. E, Box 4318, Minneapolis 18, Minn.

BIRTH CONTROL methods explained, illustrated. Book, $3.98. Eaco, Box 1242-B, Santa Rosa, California.

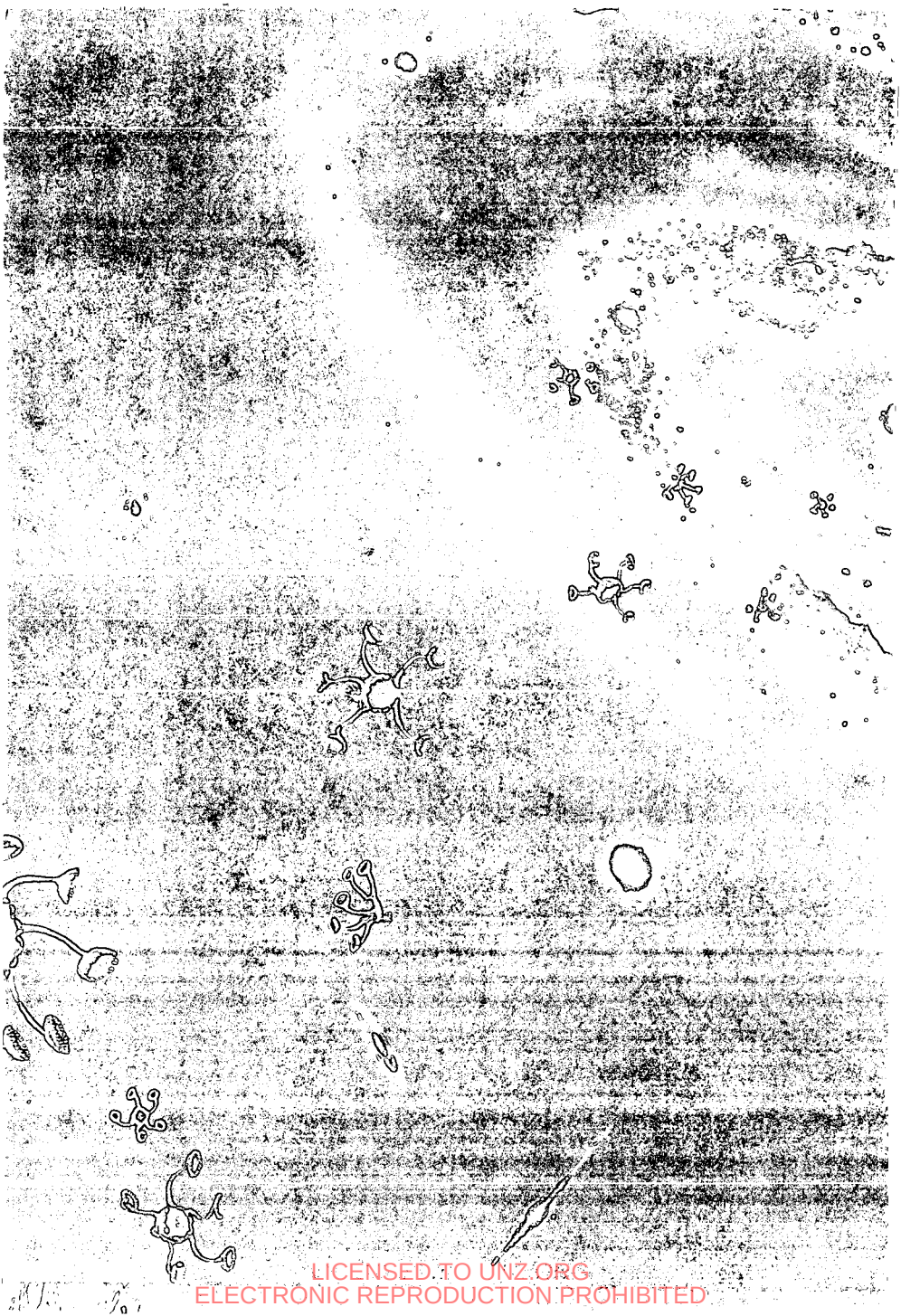
"NUDES OF JEAN STRAKER" Details $1.00. Visual Arts Club, 12 Soho Sq., London, England.

CAPACITIVE Telekinometer Plans (Transistorized psychic detector) Theory, complete instructions —$2.00 Omnian, Box 2612, St. Louis, Mo.

Do you have something to advertise to sf readers? Books, magazines, typewriters, telescopes, computers, space-drives, or misc. Use the F&SF Market Place at these low, low rates: $2.50 for minimum of ten (10) words, plus 25¢ for each additional word. Send copy and remittance to: Adv. Dept., Fantasy and Science Fiction, P.O. Box 271, Rockville Centre, N. Y.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED